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Wagner, Richard
[Der Ring des Nibelungen.
Das Rheingold. Selections;
arr.]
Selections for the piano

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FAVORITE AIRS from STANDARD OPERAS

Arranged for Piano.

With story of the Opera, Analysis, etc.

Das Rheingold

Edited by HENRY T. FINCK.

1. PARSIFAL	WAGNER
2. DIE WALKÜRE	.. ..
3. SIEGFRIED	.. ..
4. DIE MEISTERSINGER	.. ..
5. DAS RHEINGOLD	.. ..
6. GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG	.. ..
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CINCINNATI, CHICAGO, NEW YORK,
LEIPSIC, LONDON.

SELECTIONS FOR THE PIANO

—FROM—

RICHARD WAGNER'S

"DAS RHEINGOLD"

With Preface, Story of the Opera, and Analysis

BY

HENRY T. FINCK.

PUBLISHED BY
THE JOHN CHURCH COMPANY,
CINCINNATI. NEW YORK. CHICAGO. LEIPSIC. LONDON.

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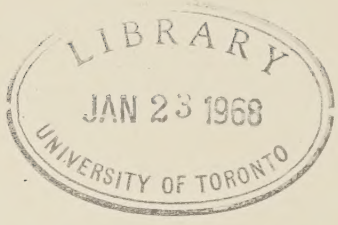

RICHARD WAGNER is now acknowledged the greatest of all dramatic composers, and his works are the chief source of income in the opera-houses not only of Germany, but of France, Italy, England, and America. Acquaintance with them is, therefore, considered a test of musical culture in amateurs as well as in professionals.

Even those who have opportunities to hear these works on the stage will find their pleasure doubled if they have previously studied these scores—which enables them, moreover, to bring back vividly the impressions of the opera-house. To those who can not hear the operas, these scores are what photographs or engravings of great paintings are to those who can not visit the greatest art galleries.

In connection with the score it is well to study a thematic guide like Wolzogen's, or Kobbé's, or, best of all, Freda Winworth's "The Epic of Sounds." As a further aid to comprehension, a brief outline of the plot is appended to this preface

Henry T. Finck

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The Ring of the Nibelung.

THE most popular of all operas at the present time is "Lohengrin." Yet when Wagner had completed that opera, in the spring of 1848, he was unable to get it performed at the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he was conductor. This was one reason why he joined in the revolutionary movement and was, consequently, obliged to seek safety in flight. He went to Switzerland, where he wrote essays and books, but composed no operas, for nearly six years. When, at last, the desire to compose came back to him, "RHEINGOLD" was the result.

"RHEINGOLD" is the first of the four music dramas constituting the great tetralogy, "The Ring of the Nibelung," which is usually called a trilogy, because Wagner himself designated "RHEINGOLD" as a "Fore-evening," or prelude, to the other three dramas—"Die Walküre," "Siegfried," and "Götterdämmerung." The name *Prelude* is not inappropriate, because "RHEINGOLD" is much shorter than the three operas which constitute the trilogy, lasting, as it does, only five half-hours, while the duration of the others is nearer five whole hours.

Shortly after completing "Lohengrin," Wagner made a prose sketch of the story of the "Nibelung's Ring." Then he wrote a dramatic poem, "Siegfried's Death," in which he made use of part of that story. While preparing to set this to music, he became convinced that the subject was too big for one drama; that there was material enough for several connected operas; and that the opera he had had in mind would be more intelligible and impressive if it were preceded by several others dealing with the incidents that led up to Siegfried's death; consequently he recast the poem he had called "Siegfried's Death," and changed its name to "Götterdämmerung." Then he wrote "Siegfried," "Die Walküre," and "Rheingold."

The poems of the "Ring" dramas were, therefore, written in the reverse order to their performance. The musical compositions, however, began with "Rheingold," and ended with "Götterdämmerung."

THE STORY OF "RHEINGOLD"

In the Golden Age the curse of gold was unknown. Gods, giants, dwarfs, and human beings inhabited the world, but they had no gold to quarrel over. It lay buried in the bed of the Rhine, guarded by the three Rhine daughters. One day Alberich, Prince of the Nibelungs, or subterranean dwarfs, emerges out of an abyss, and tries to catch one of them. After teasing him coquettishly, they unwisely inform him that the gold which is at that moment seen glittering brightly in the morning sun, would, if forged into a Ring, make its possessor ruler of the world. No one, however, they add, can remove the gold unless he renounces love for woman. On hearing this, Alberich's desire for one of them changes at once to lust for gold and power. He curses love, snatches the gold from the rock, and plunges into the depths below, leaving the maidens to regret their folly and lament their gold.

The scene changes gradually to a mountainous region, where the morning sun shines on the castle Walhalla, which the giants, Fasolt and Fafner, had built for Wotan, King of the gods. In return for their labor Wotan had promised them Freia, the goddess of youth and beauty. But Wotan never intended to keep his promise, for on the presence of Freia depends the continued youth and health of the gods. The giants arrive and threaten to carry her off by force. At this crisis the fire-god Loge comes and tells of what Alberich has done that very morning, renouncing love for gold. The giants promptly agree to do the same, and Wotan sets out with Loge for Nibelheim, the home of the dwarfs, to see if he can not, with the aid of Loge's cunning, take away from Alberich the gold he had stolen, and use it for the ransom of Freia.

They disappear in a cleft, from which arise dense vapors; and when the scene has changed we find ourselves in the underground Nibelheim, to which Alberich had returned after stealing the gold, and had forged the Ring which has enabled him to enslave all the other dwarfs. One of these, his own brother Mime, has just made a Tarnhelm, or magic helmet, which enables the wearer to assume any form he pleases. Alberich takes it from him and, making himself invisible, belabors him with a whip. When Wotan and Loge appear, he angrily asks what they want. Loge craftily leads him to speak of the helmet and its magic qualities, pretending that he doubts these. To prove them, Alberich assumes the form of a large snake, and then of a toad; whereupon Wotan puts his foot on him, while Loge snatches away the helmet. This puts Alberich in their power; he is bound and dragged to the mountain summit near Walhalla. There Wotan commands him to summon the dwarfs and compel them to bring up all the gold they had dug from the earth, to serve as ransom for Freia. He also takes away the Tarnhelm and the Ring; whereupon Alberich curses the Ring, which thenceforth is to bring ruin and death to all who own it.

Returning with Freia, whom they had kept as security, the giants demand gold sufficient in amount to cover her body entirely. There is enough for all except the head, and the Tarnhelmet has to be given up, too; but still the giants can see

one of Freia's eyes. The Ring alone remains to cover up the gap; but Wotan refuses to part with it. At this moment Erda, the mother of the Fates, appears and solemnly warns Wotan. Reluctantly he gives up the Ring, which promptly fulfills Alberich's curse. The giants quarrel over the spoils, and Fafner kills Fasolt. The gods march into Walhalla over a rainbow bridge which spans the Rhine, while the three maidens are heard below lamenting the loss of their gold.

When Wagner began to compose the music that so greatly heightens the charms of this story (in November, 1853), he wrote to a friend: "I got so enthusiastic over it that until it was finished I had neither ears nor eyes for anything else." And no wonder, for, as Saint-Saëns wrote regarding this opera, "Wagner has imitated the medieval artists, who sculptured a cathedral as minutely as they would have decorated furniture." The details of this "musical sculpture" afford an endless source of study and delight. Perhaps more than any other of Wagner's operas, "RHEINGOLD" requires scenery to produce its full effect; yet there are many pages of superlative beauty as music alone. Conspicuous among these, are the introduction, with its bass and harmonies changeless for 135 bars; Wotan's greeting of Walhalla; the sunrise revealing the gold; the demand for Freia by the giants; Loge's narrative; the descent to the lower world; Mime's lament; the bringing up of the gold by the dwarfs; the bringing back of Freia by the giants; Erda's warning; and the superb final scenes, including the thunderstorm, the rainbow, and the trio of the Rhinemaidens.

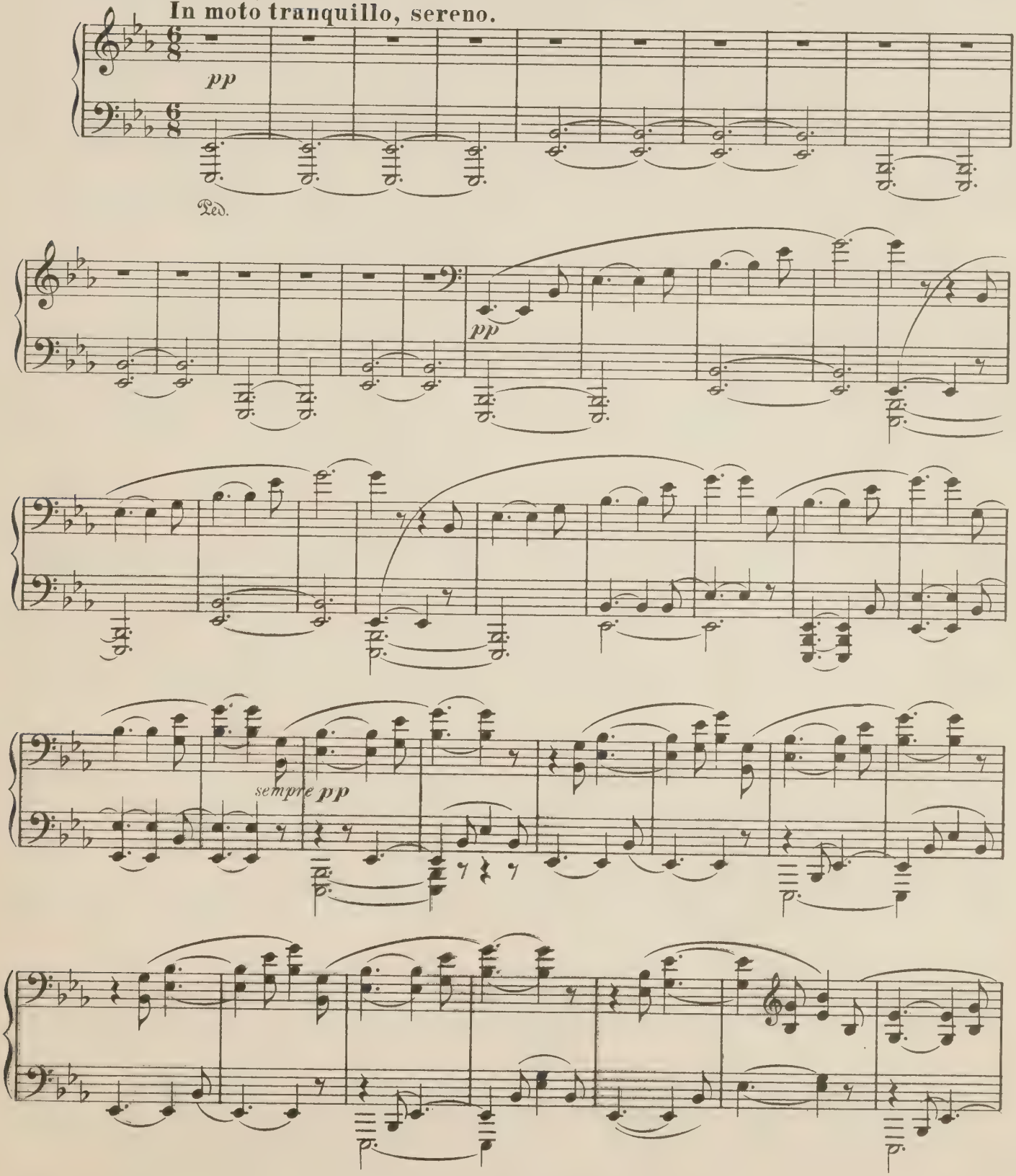
HENRY T. FINCK.

DAS RHEINGOLD.

RICHARD WAGNER.

(ACT I. PRELUDE.)

In moto tranquillo, sereno.



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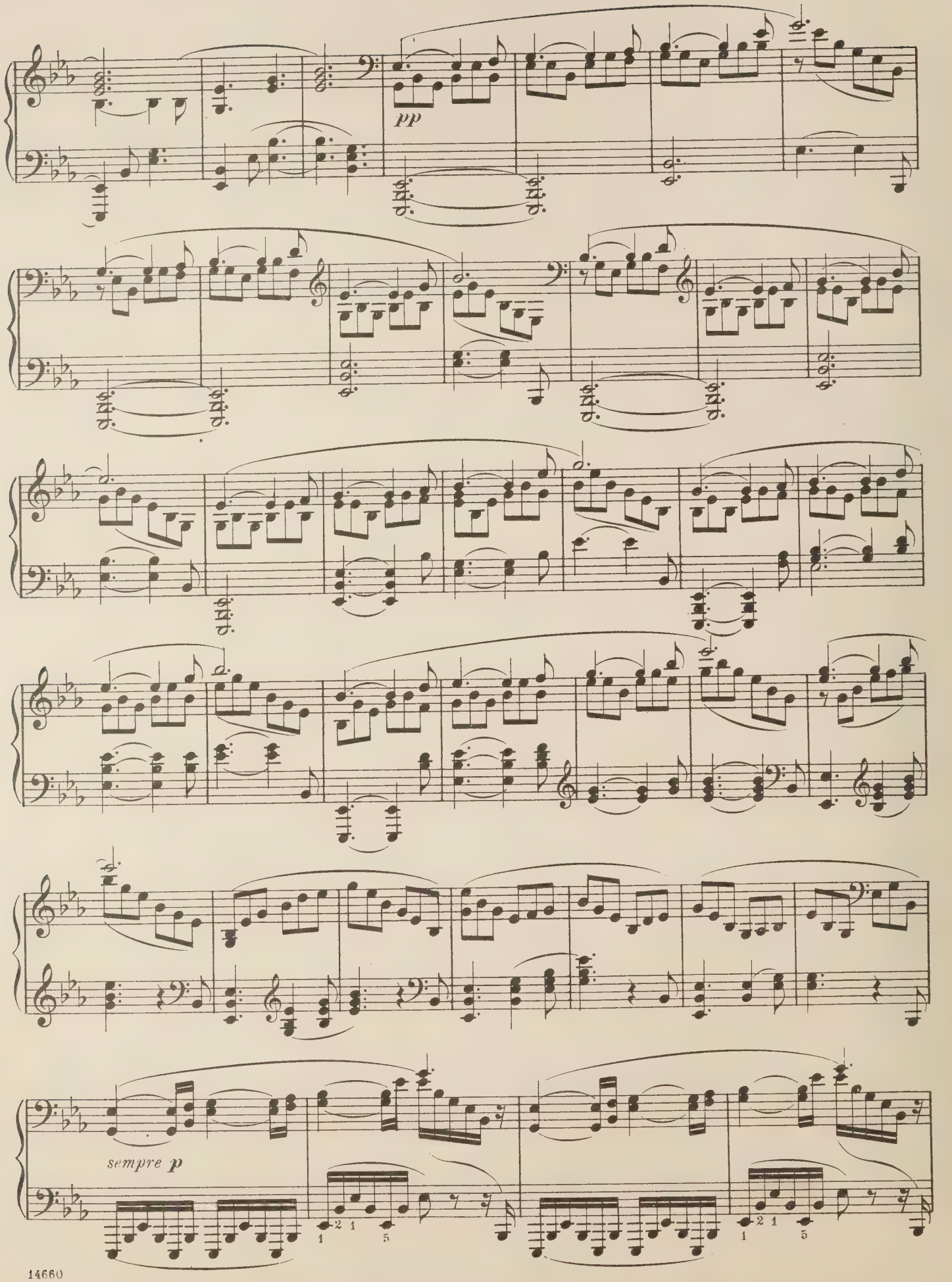
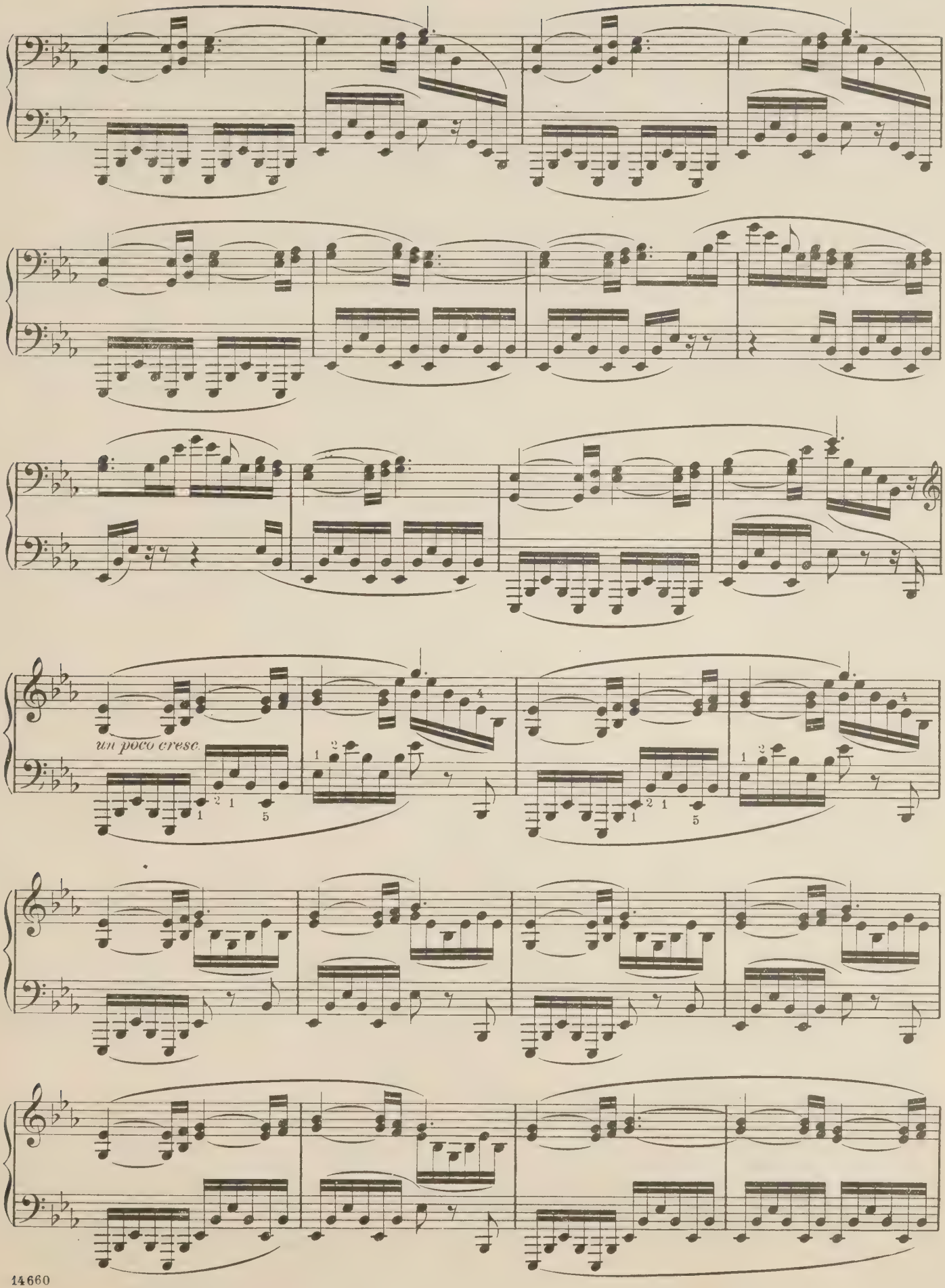
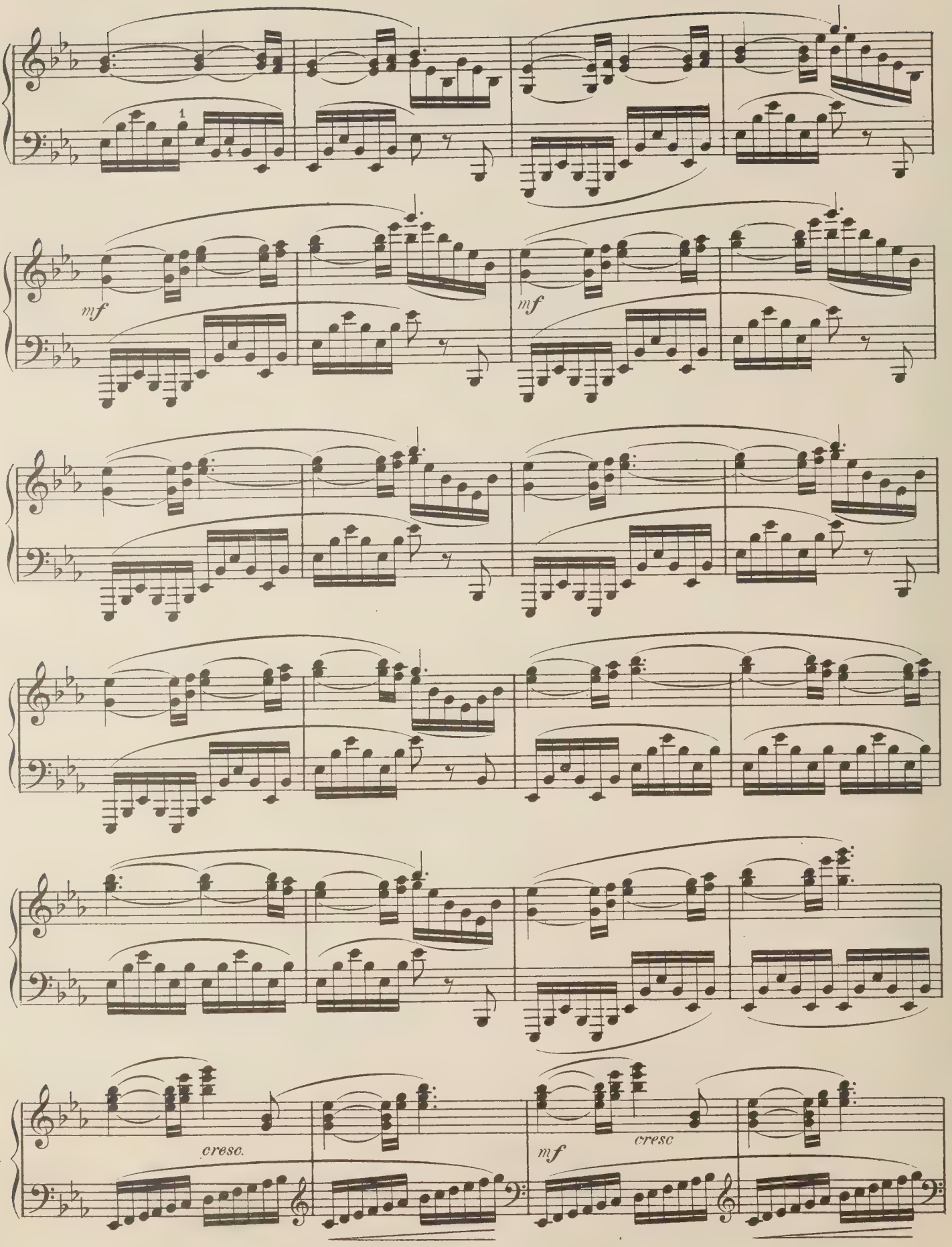
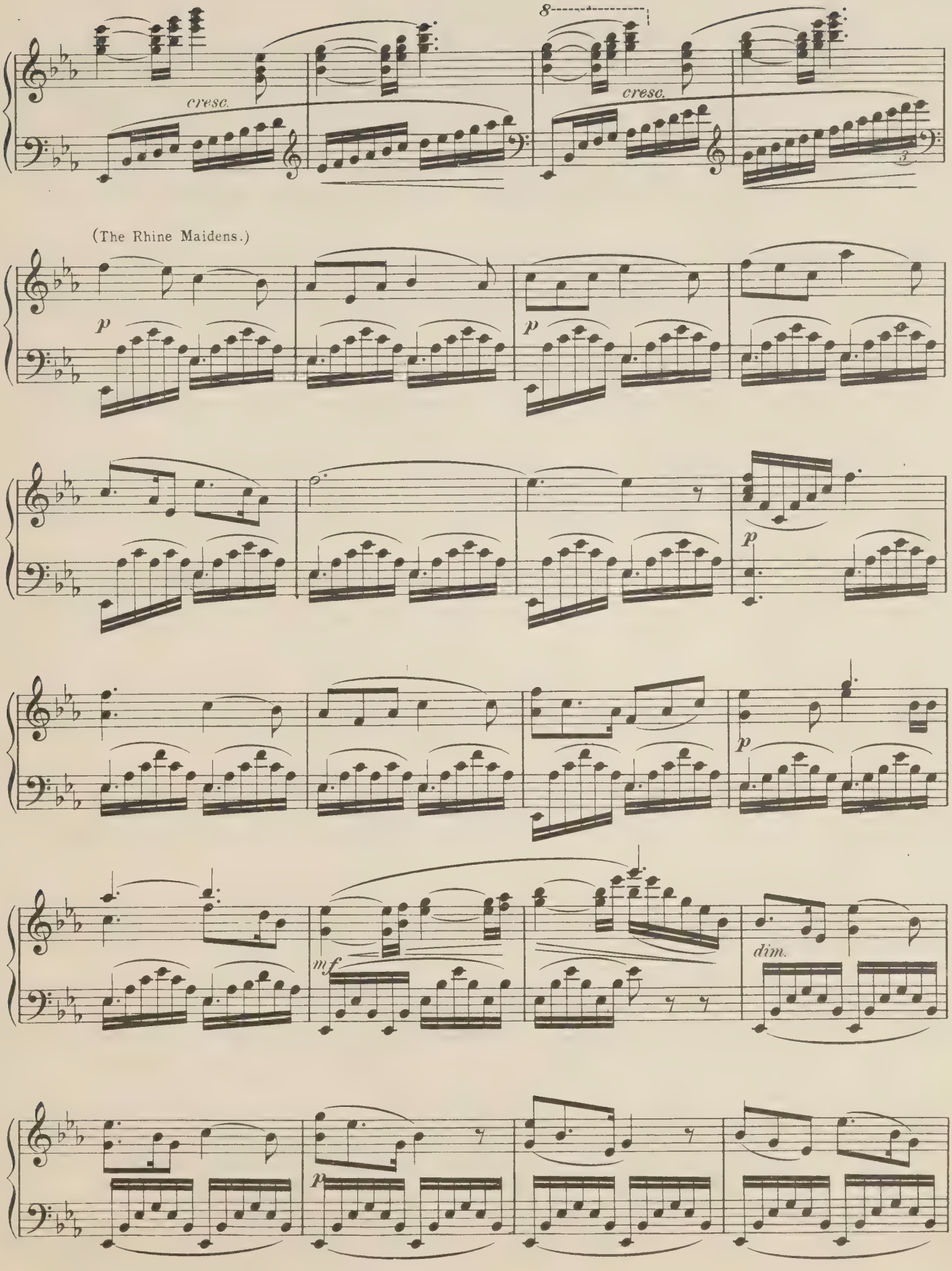
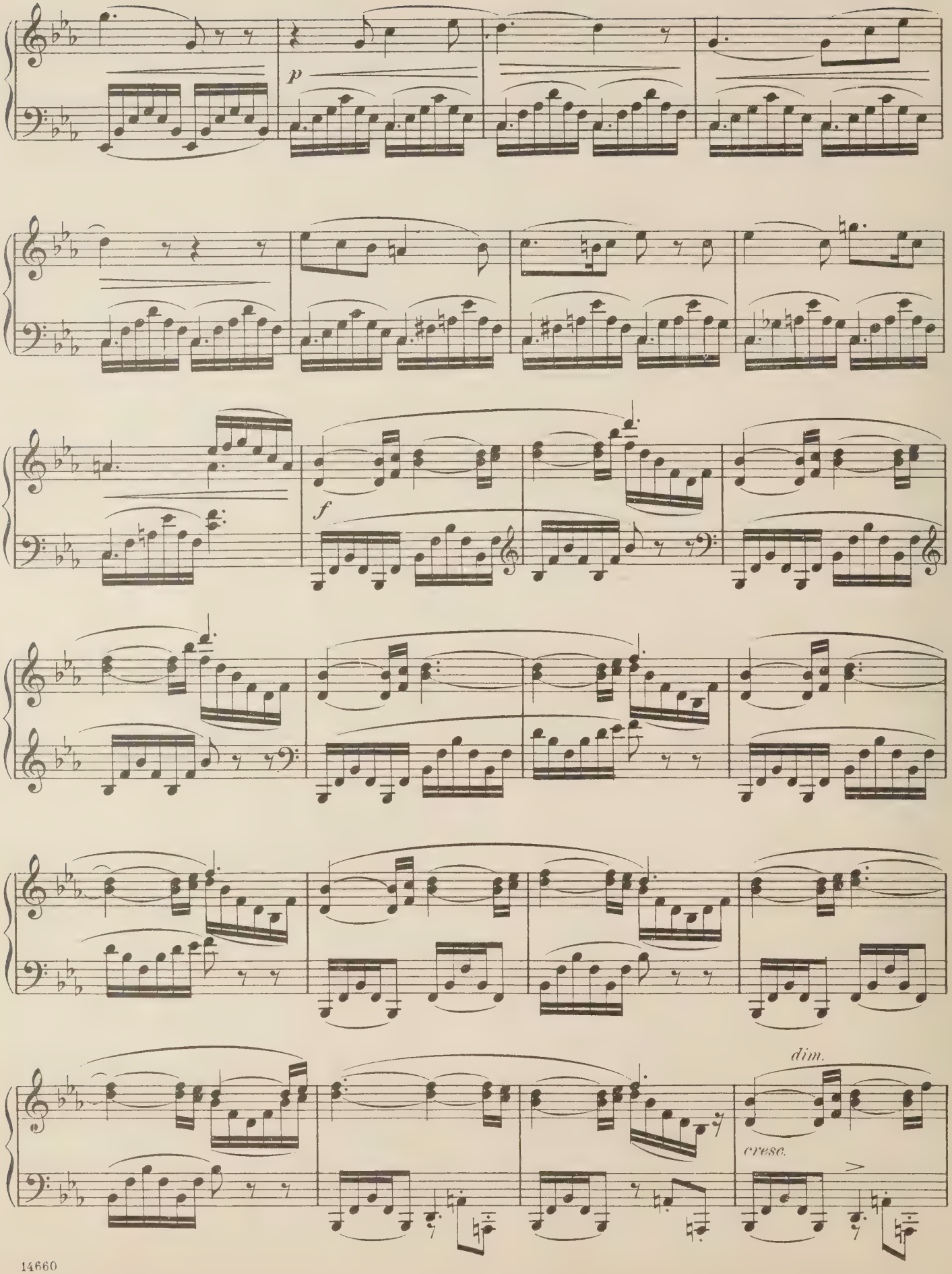
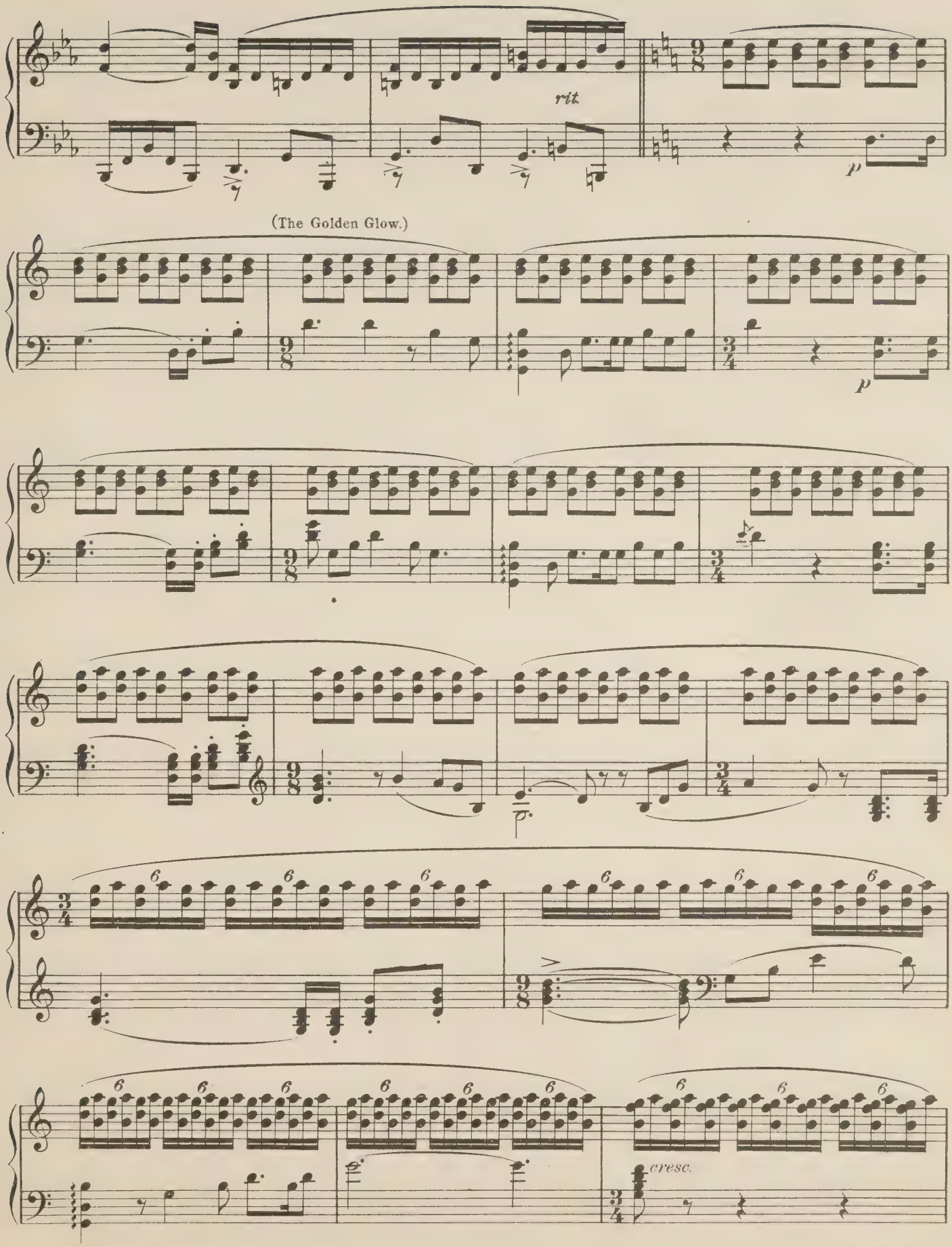

pp
sempre p

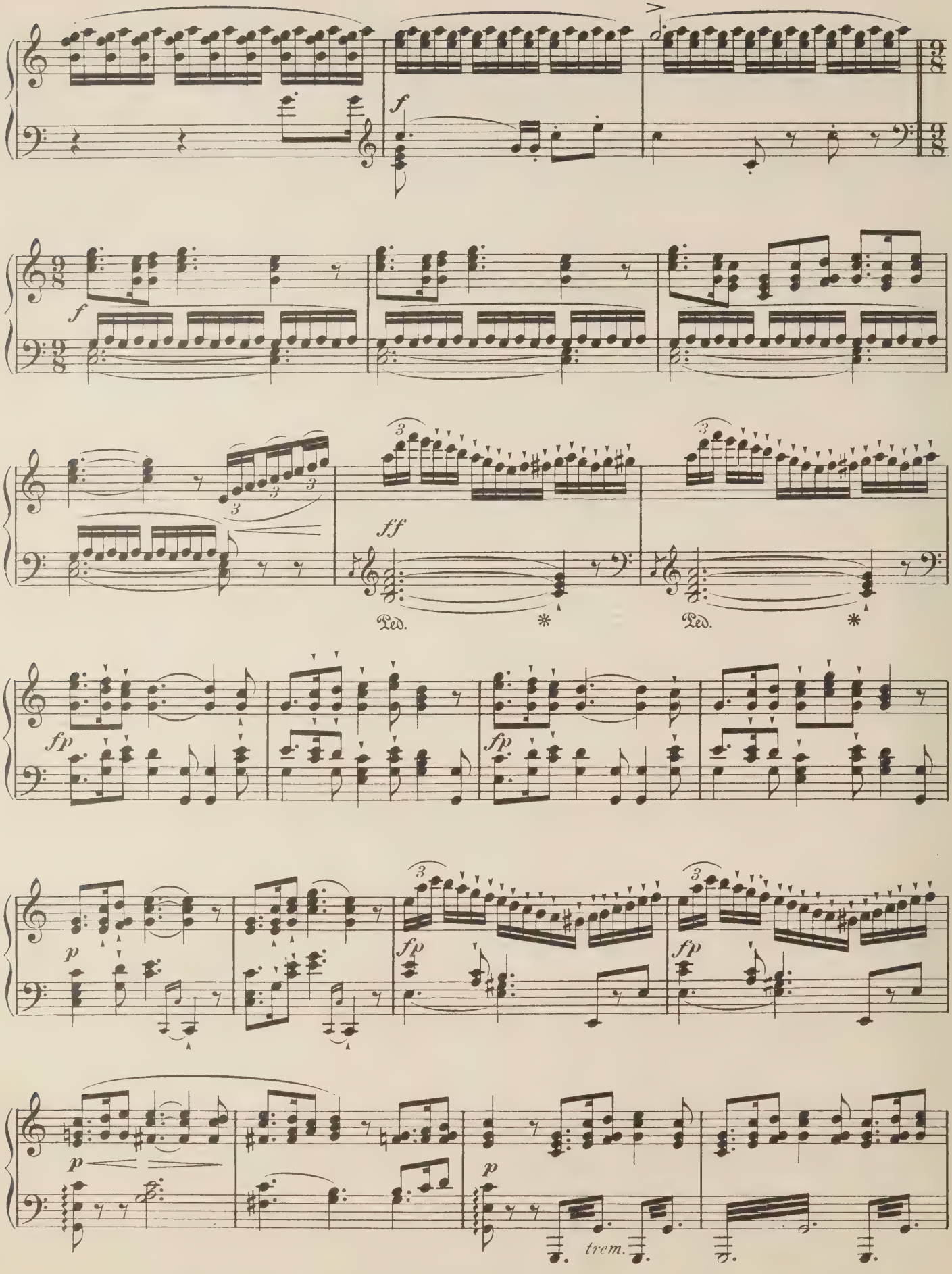

un poco cresc.

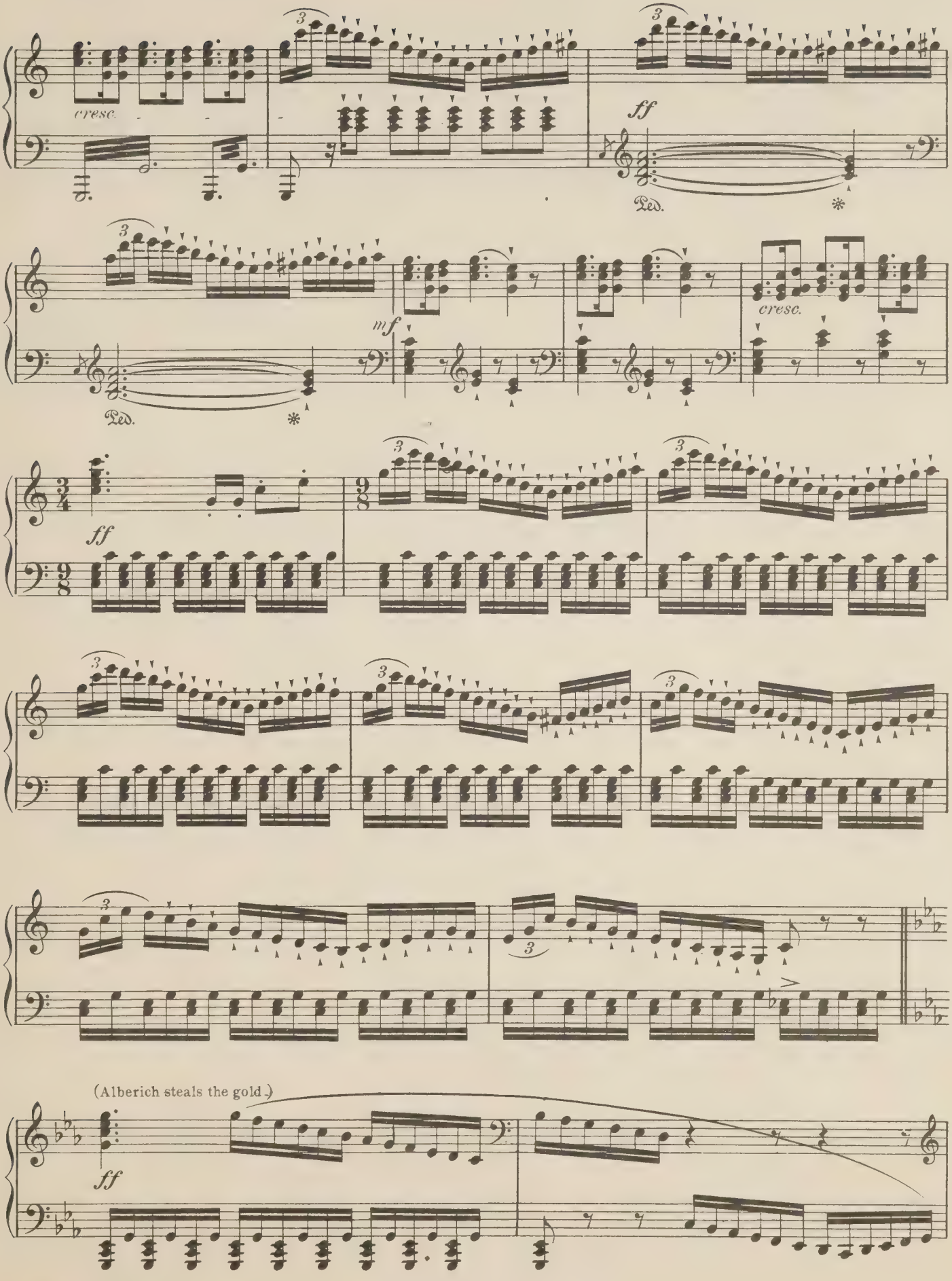

mf
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc

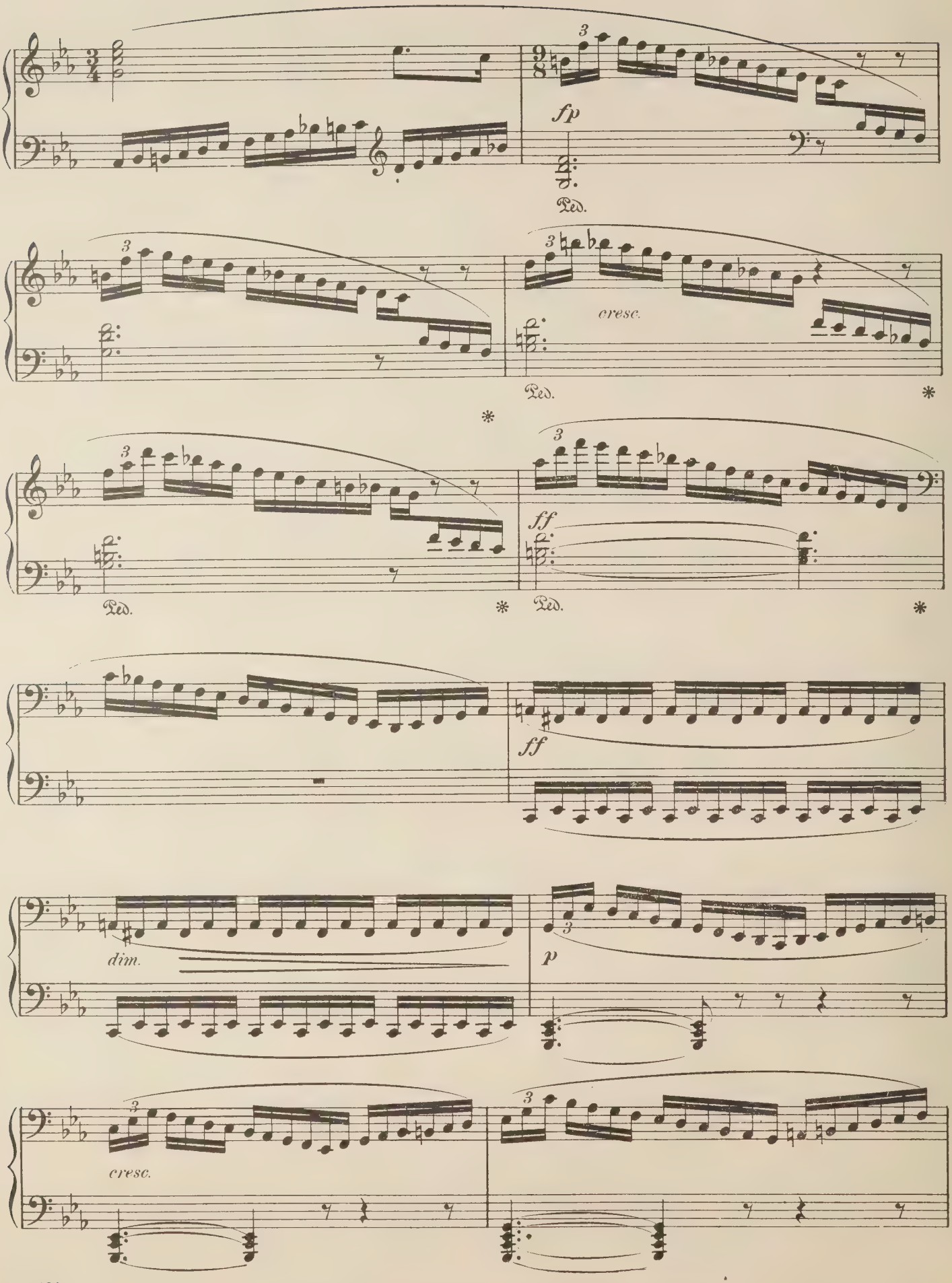

cresc.
8
cresc.
(The Rhine Maidens.)
p
p
p
p
mf
dim.
p

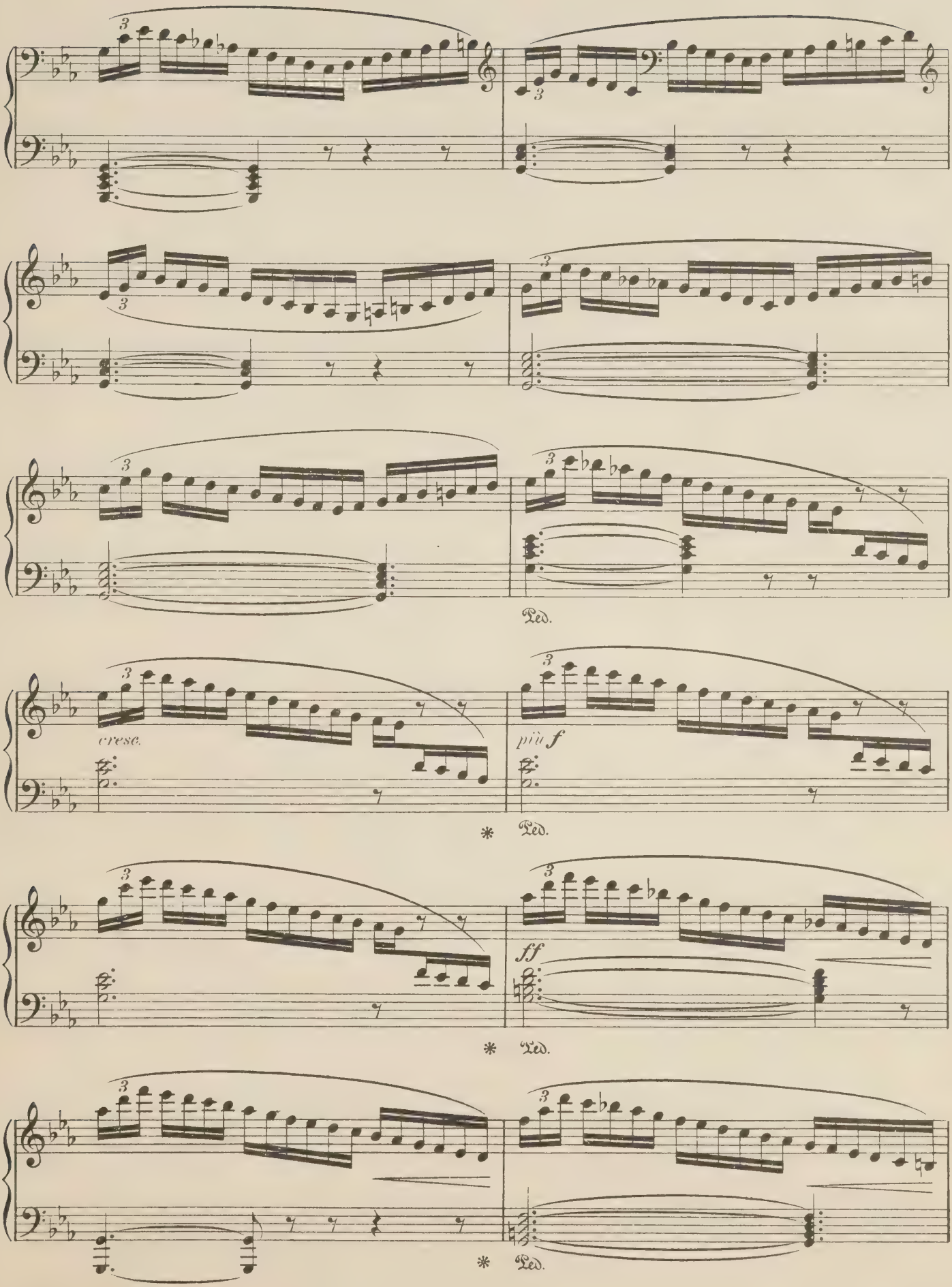

p
f
dim.
cresc.

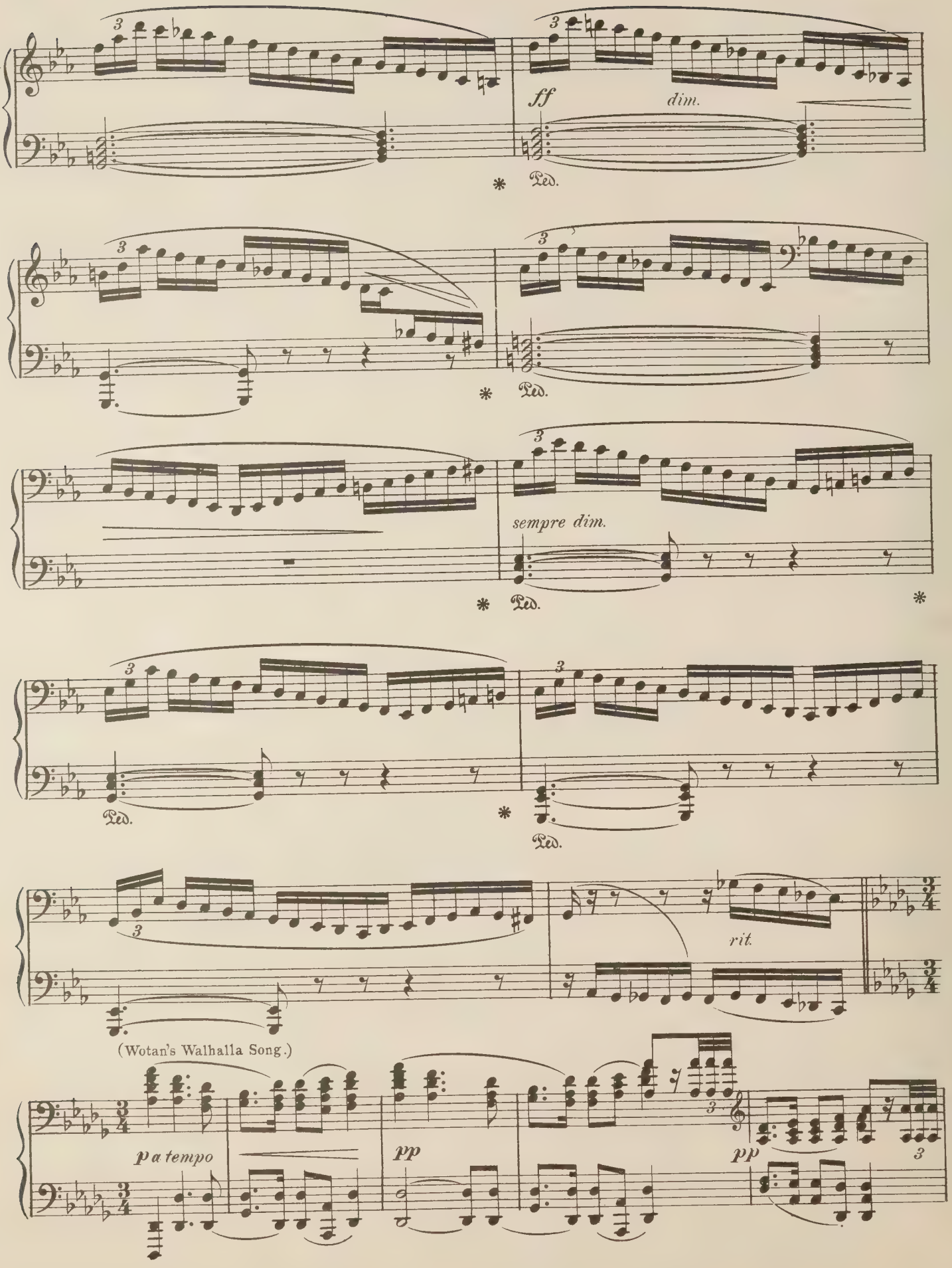

rit.
p
(The Golden Glow.)
p
cresc.

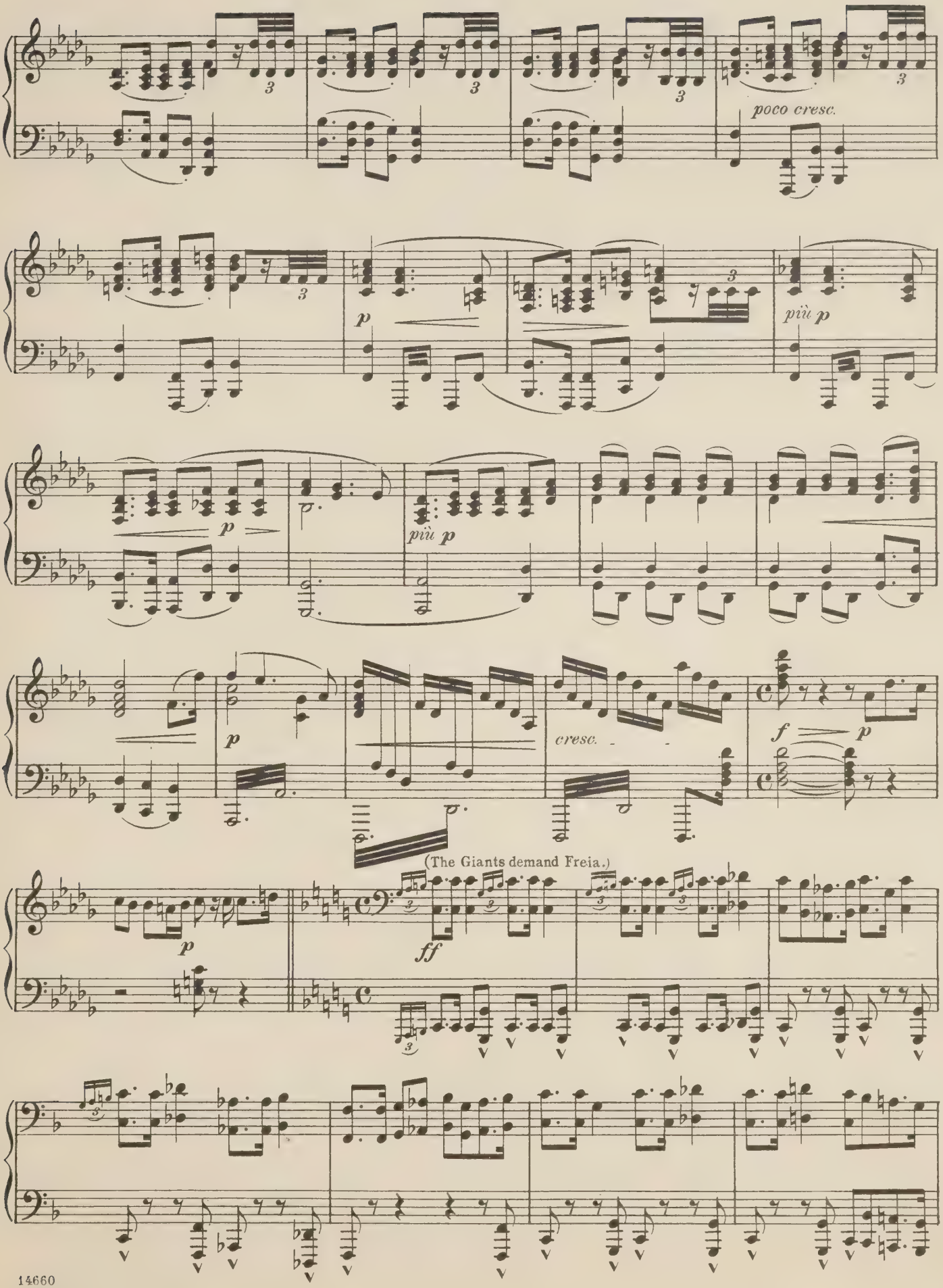

f
f
ff
Ped.
*
Ped.
*
fp
fp
p
fp
fp
p
p
trem.

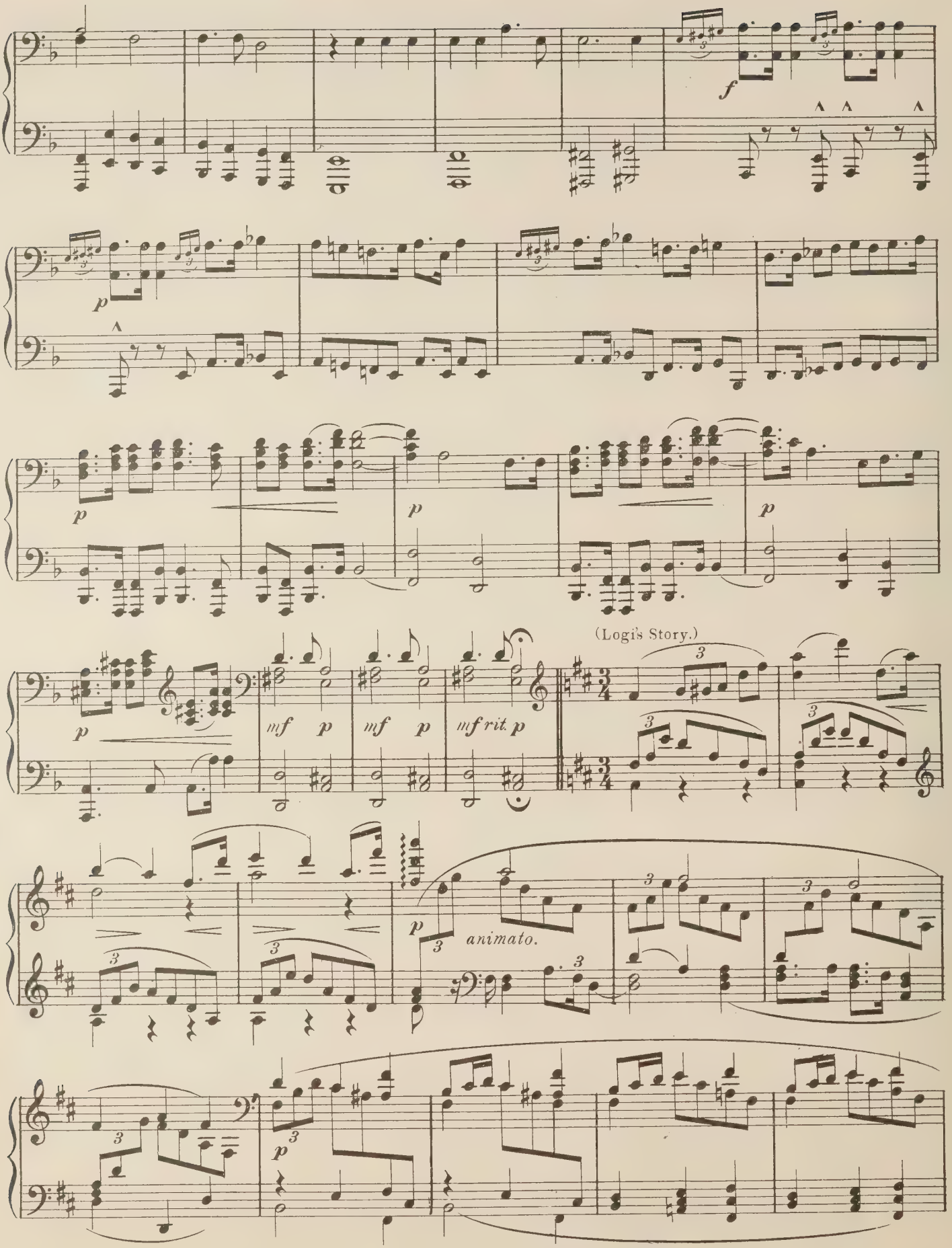

cresc.
ff
Ped.
*
mf
cresc.
ff
(Alberich steals the gold.)
ff

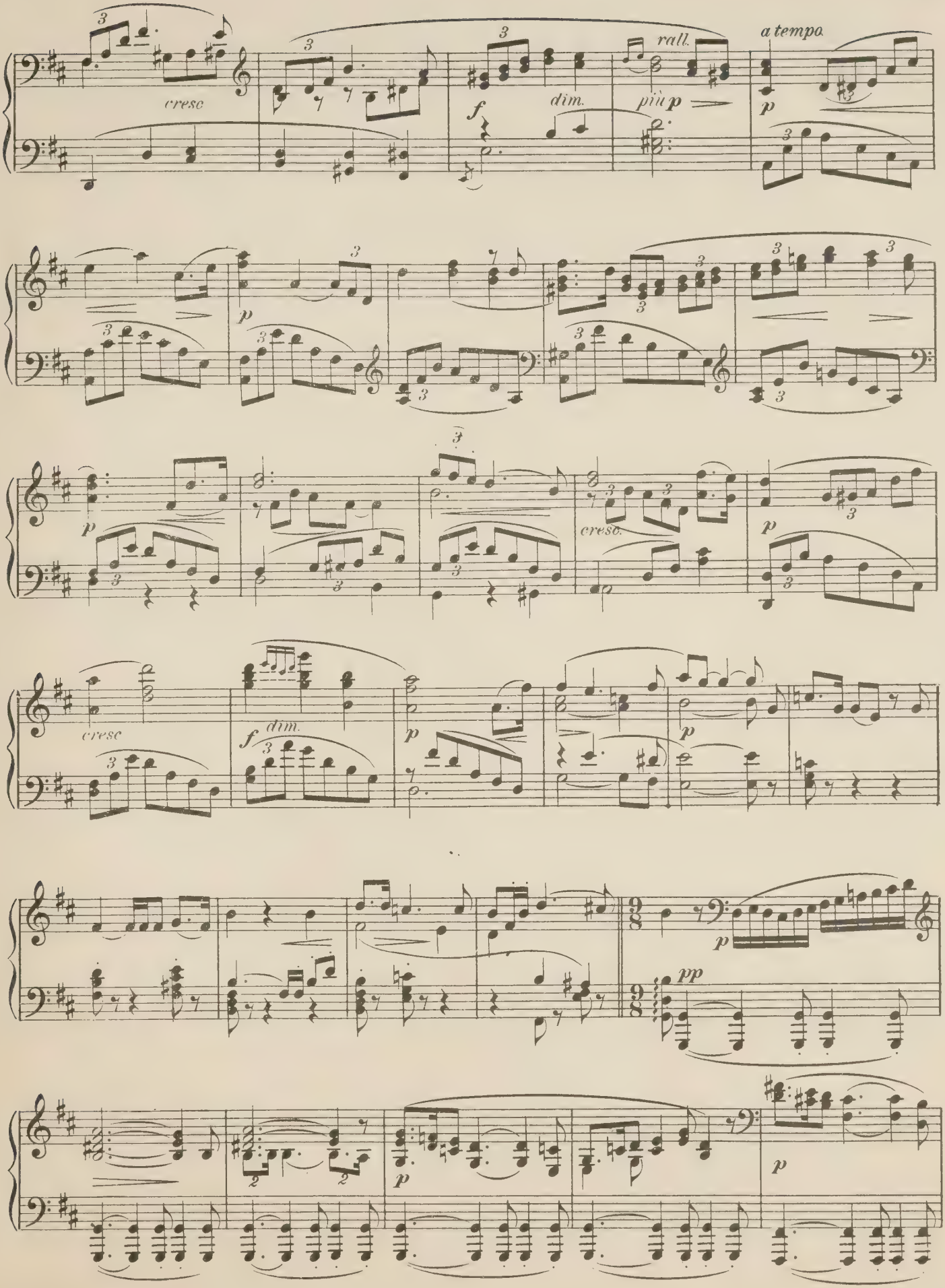

fp
Ped.
cresc.
Ped.
*
Ped.
*
ff
Ped.
*
ff
dim.
p
cresc.

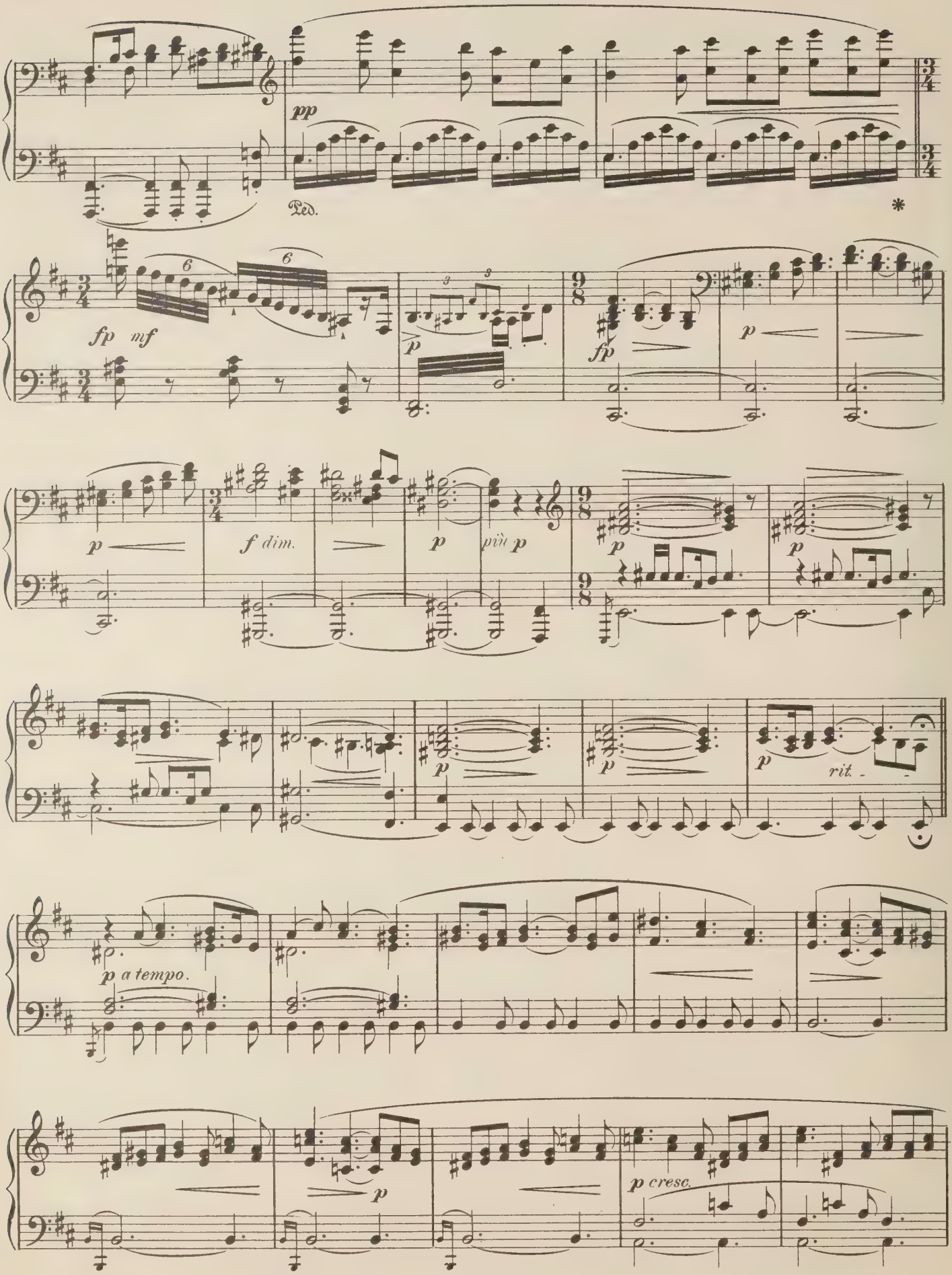

Ped.
cresc.
più f
Ped.
ff
Ped.
Ped.

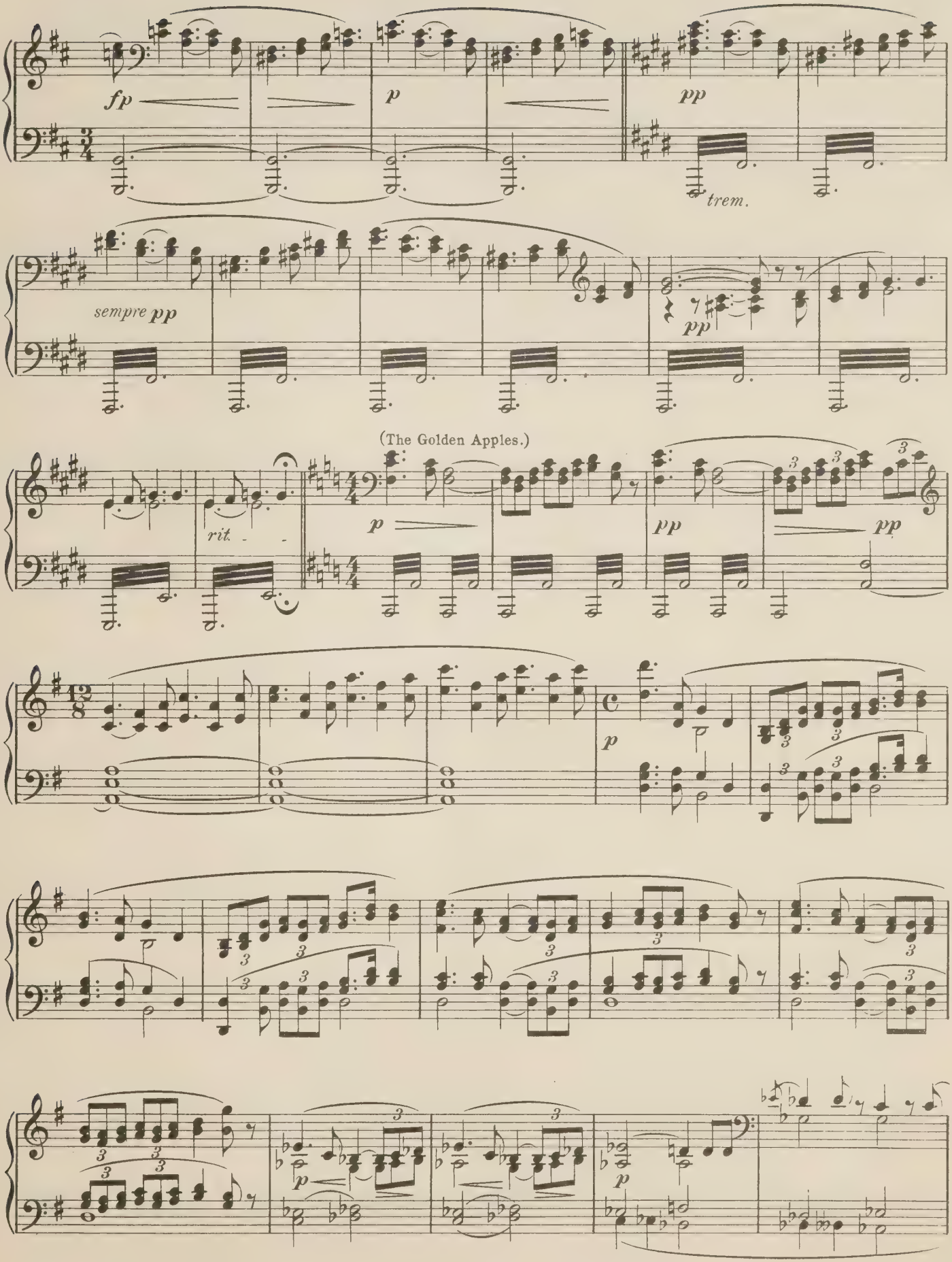

ff
dim.
Ped.
sempre dim.
rit.
(Wotan's Walhalla Song.)
p a tempo
pp
pp

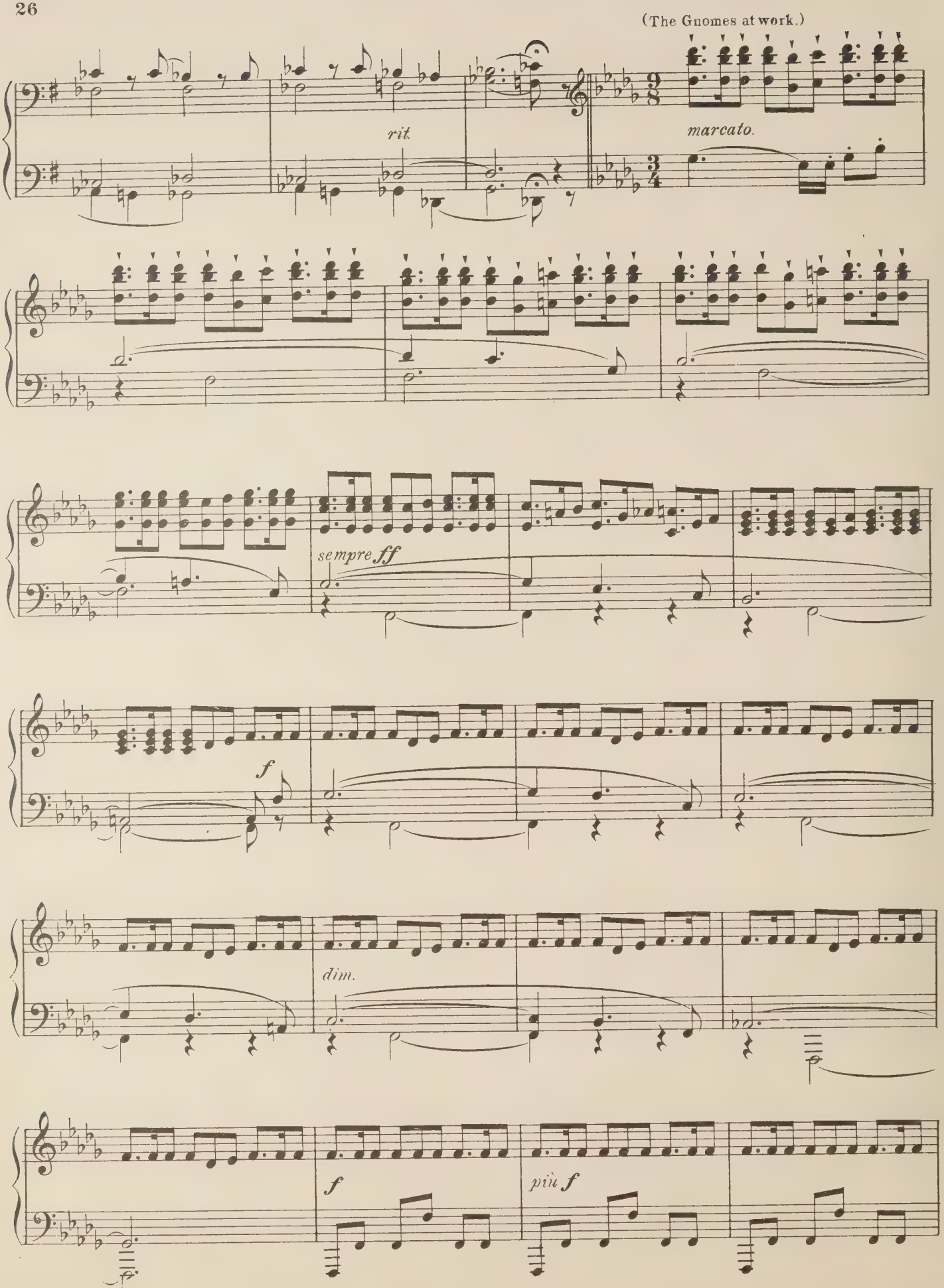

poco cresc.
p
più p
p
più p
p
cresc.
f
p
(The Giants demand Freia.)
p
ff

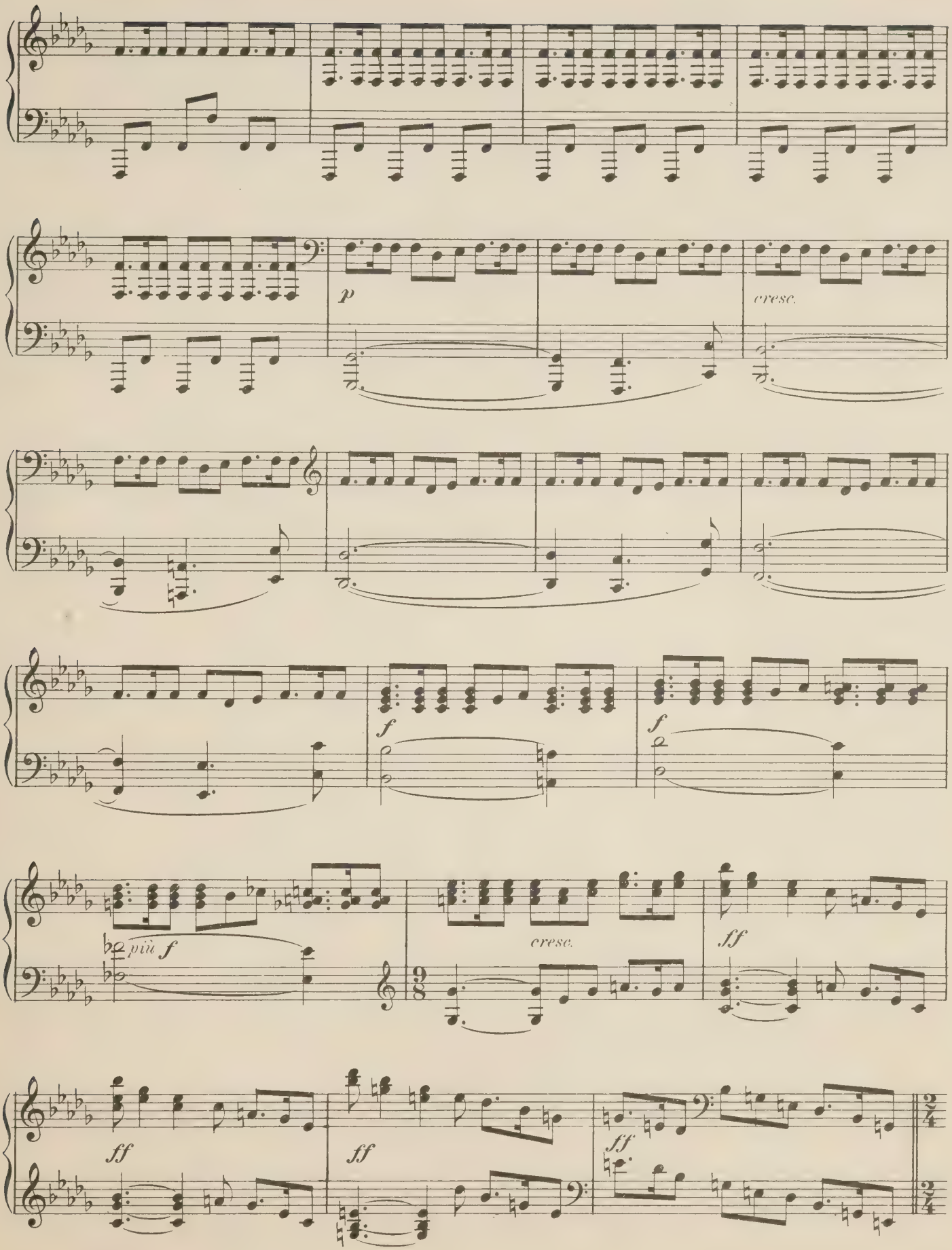

f
p
p
p
p
mf p
mf p
mf rit. p
(Logi's Story.)
p
animato.
p

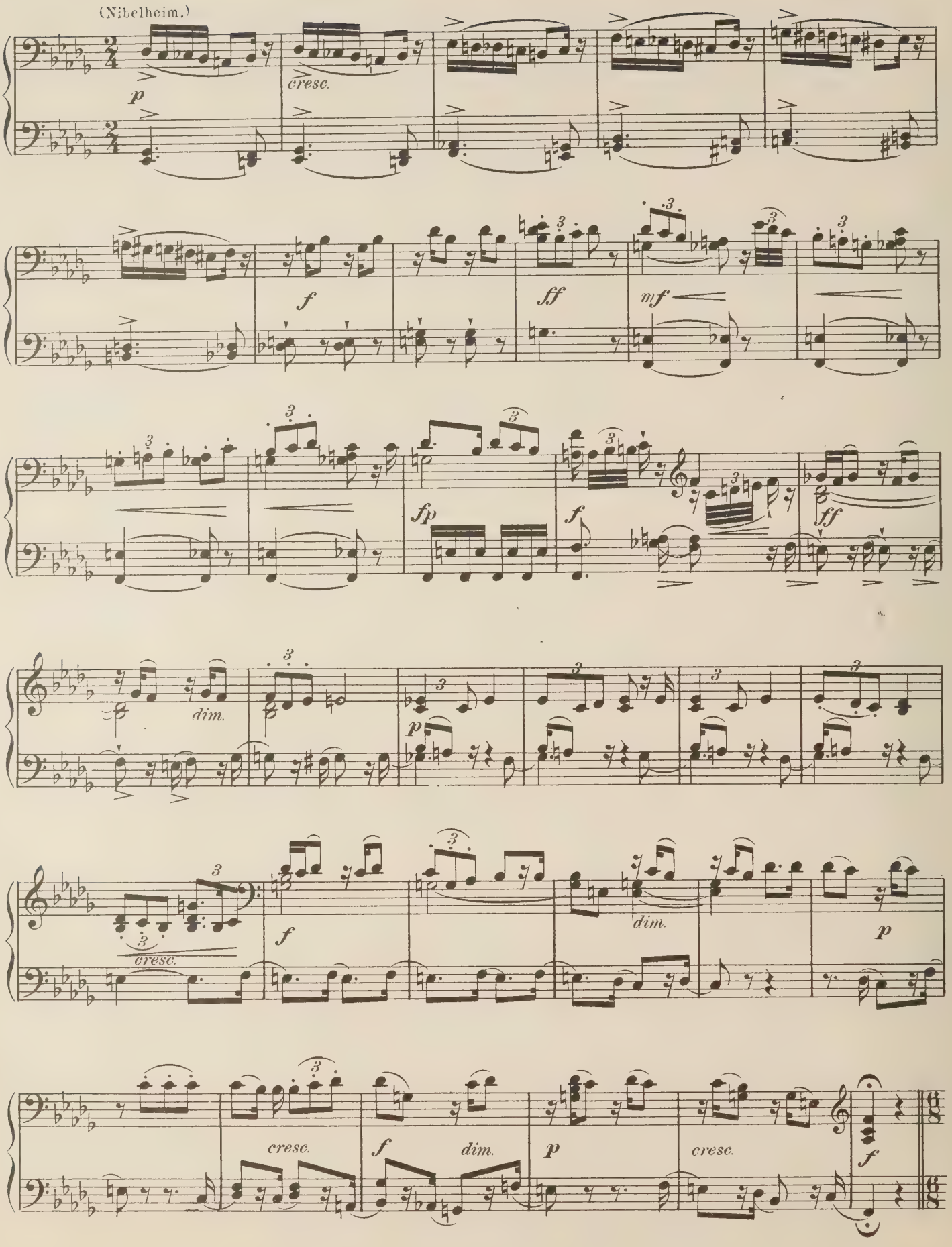

cresc
f
dim.
rall.
più p
a tempo
p
cresc.
pp

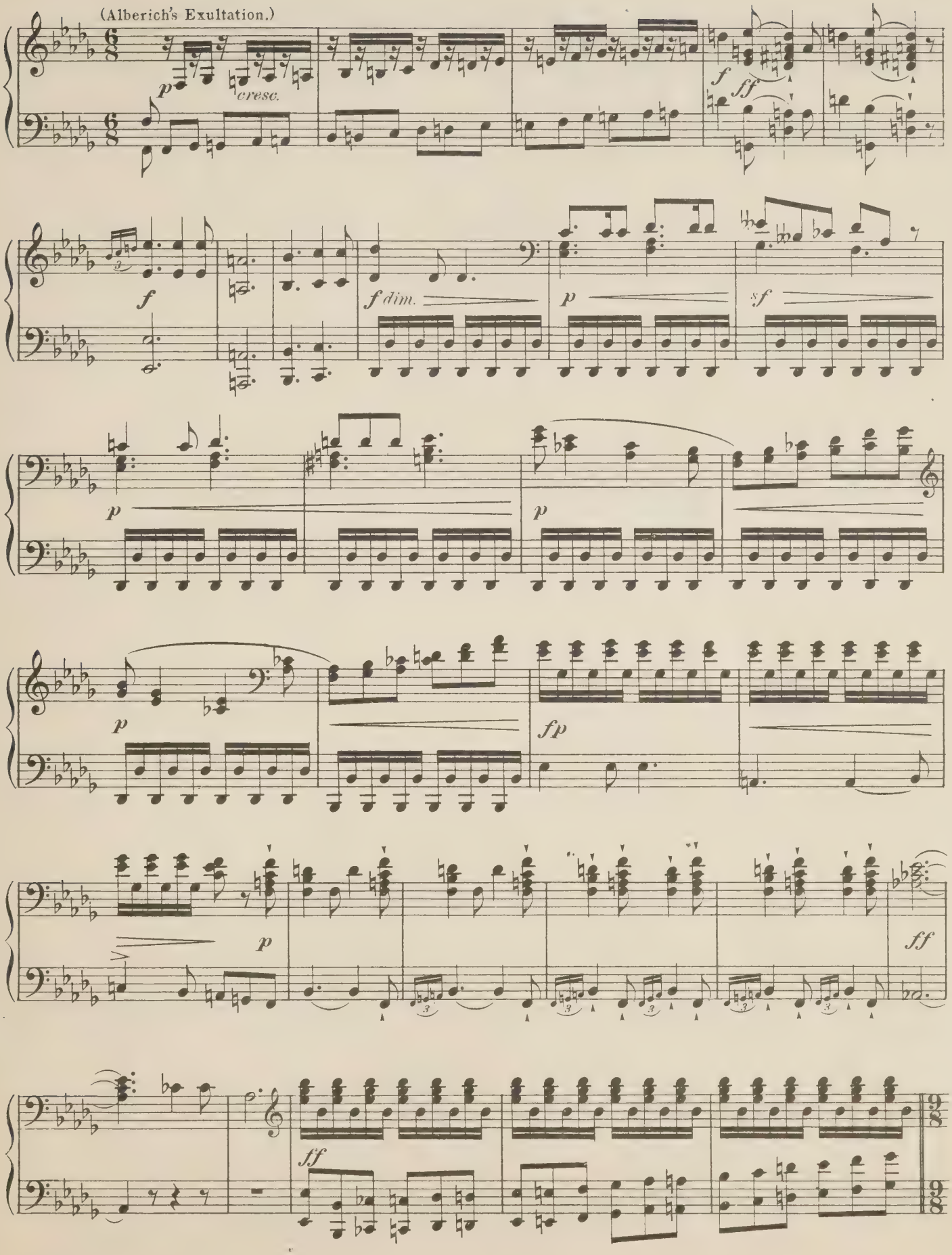

pp
Ped.
*
fp mf
p
fp
p
f dim.
p
più p
p
p
p
rit.
p a tempo.
p
p cresc.

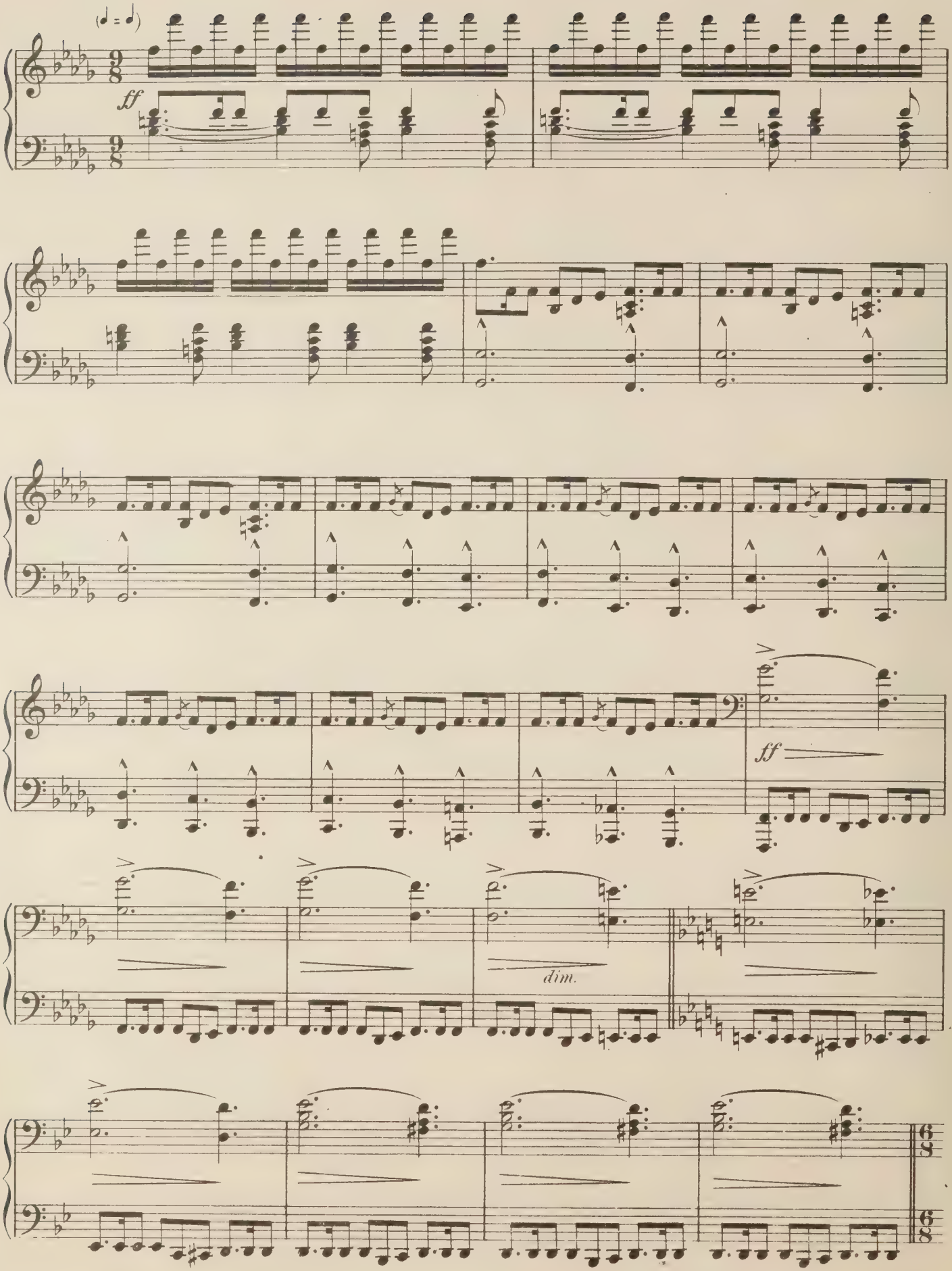

fp
p
pp
trem.
sempre pp
pp
(The Golden Apples.)
rit.
p
pp
pp
p
p
p

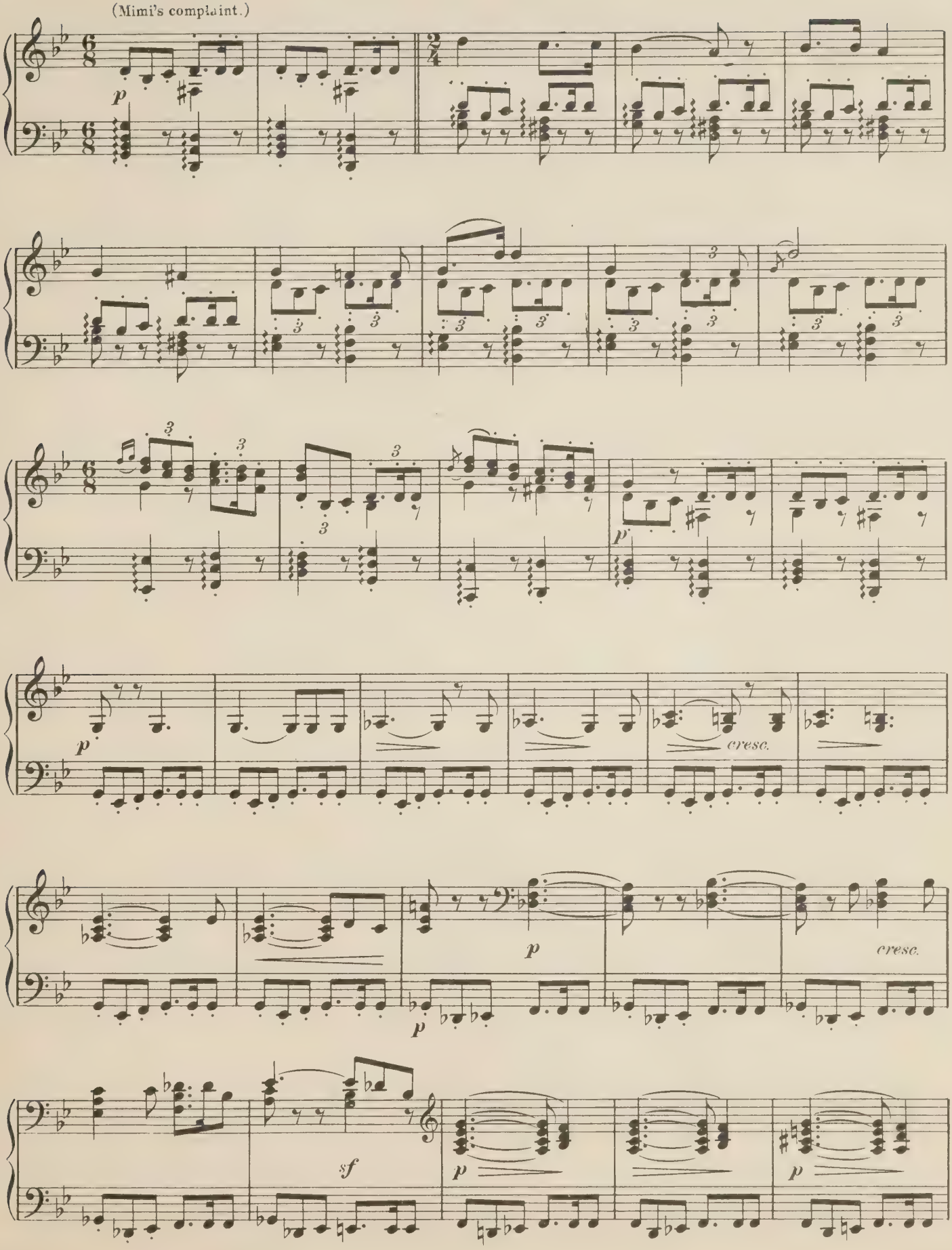

(The Gnomes at work.)
rit.
marcato.
sempre ff
f
dim.
f
più f

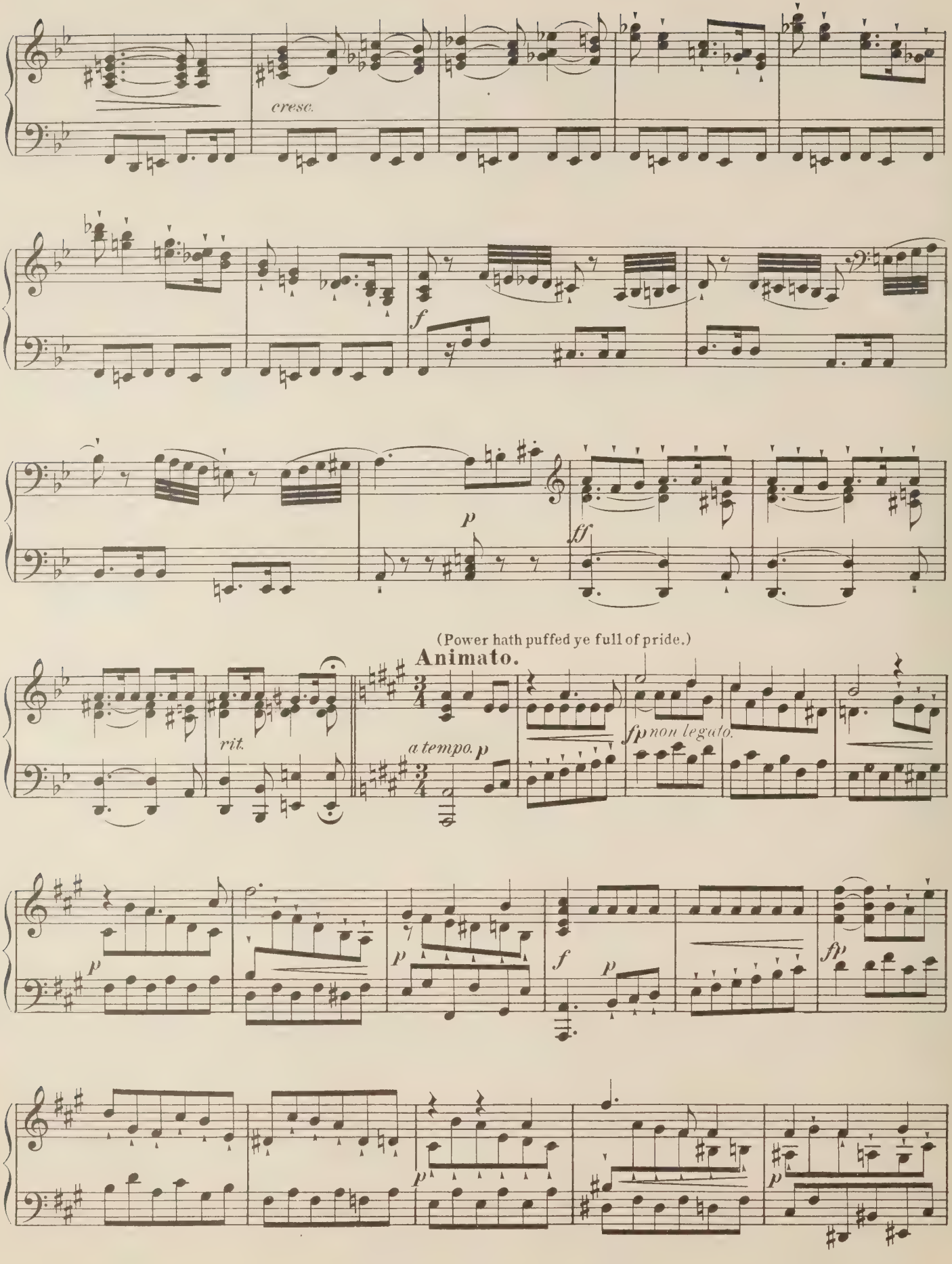

p
cresc.
f
f
più f
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
ff

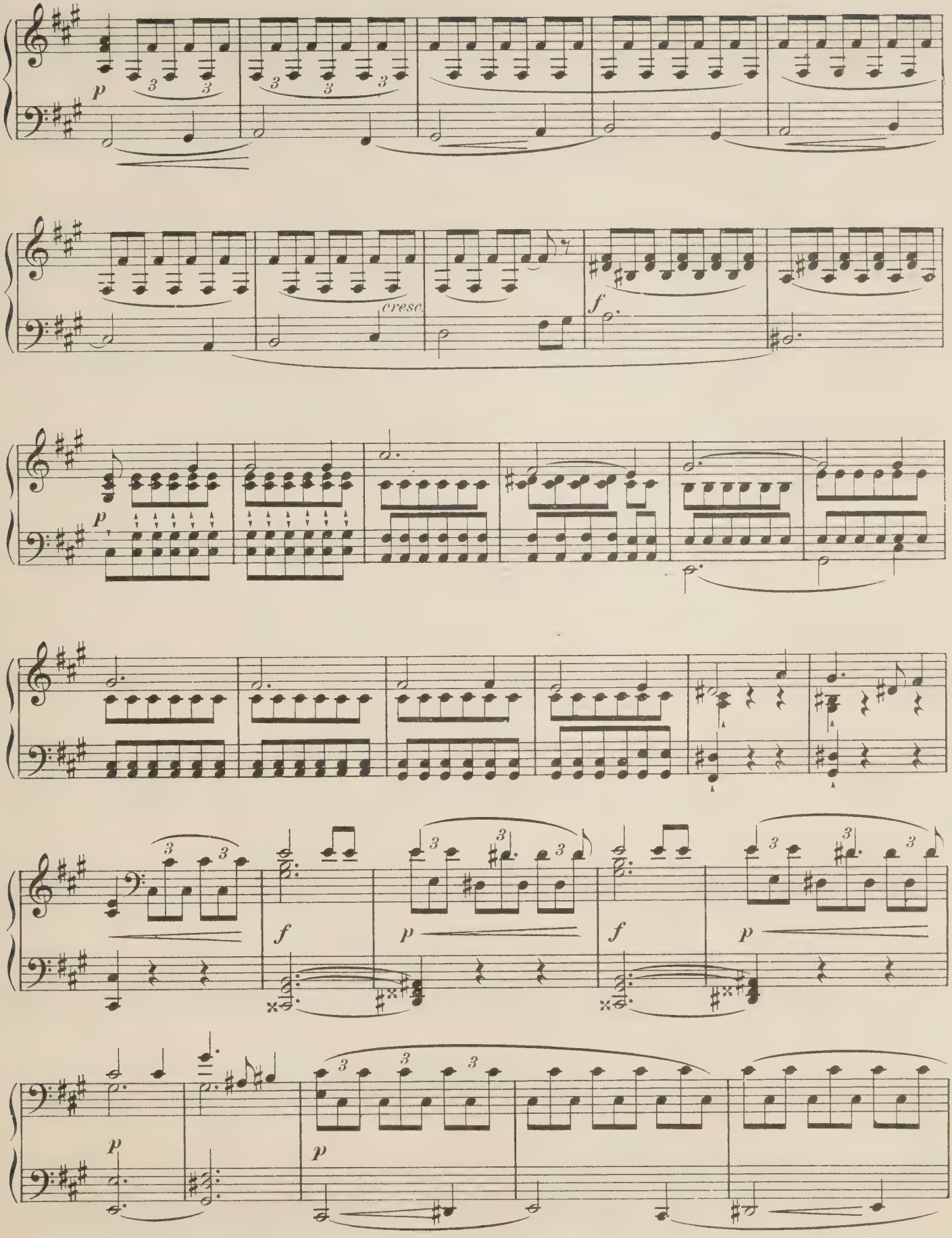

(Nibelheim.)
p
cresc.
f
ff
mf
fp
f
ff
dim.
p
cresc.
f
dim.
p
cresc.
cresc.
f
dim.
p
cresc.
f

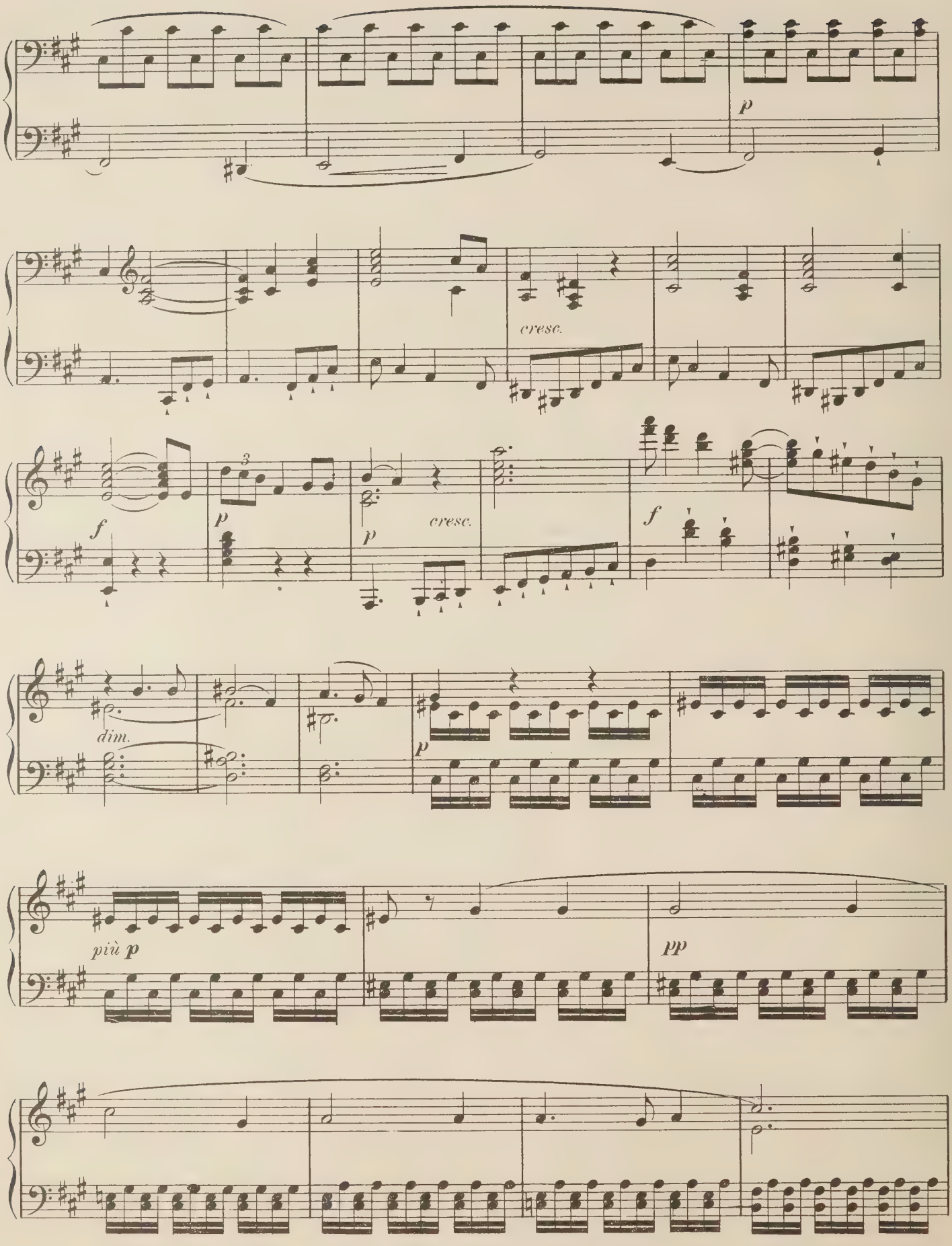

(Alberich's Exultation.)
p
cresc.
f
ff
f
f dim.
p
sf
p
p
p
fp
p
ff
ff

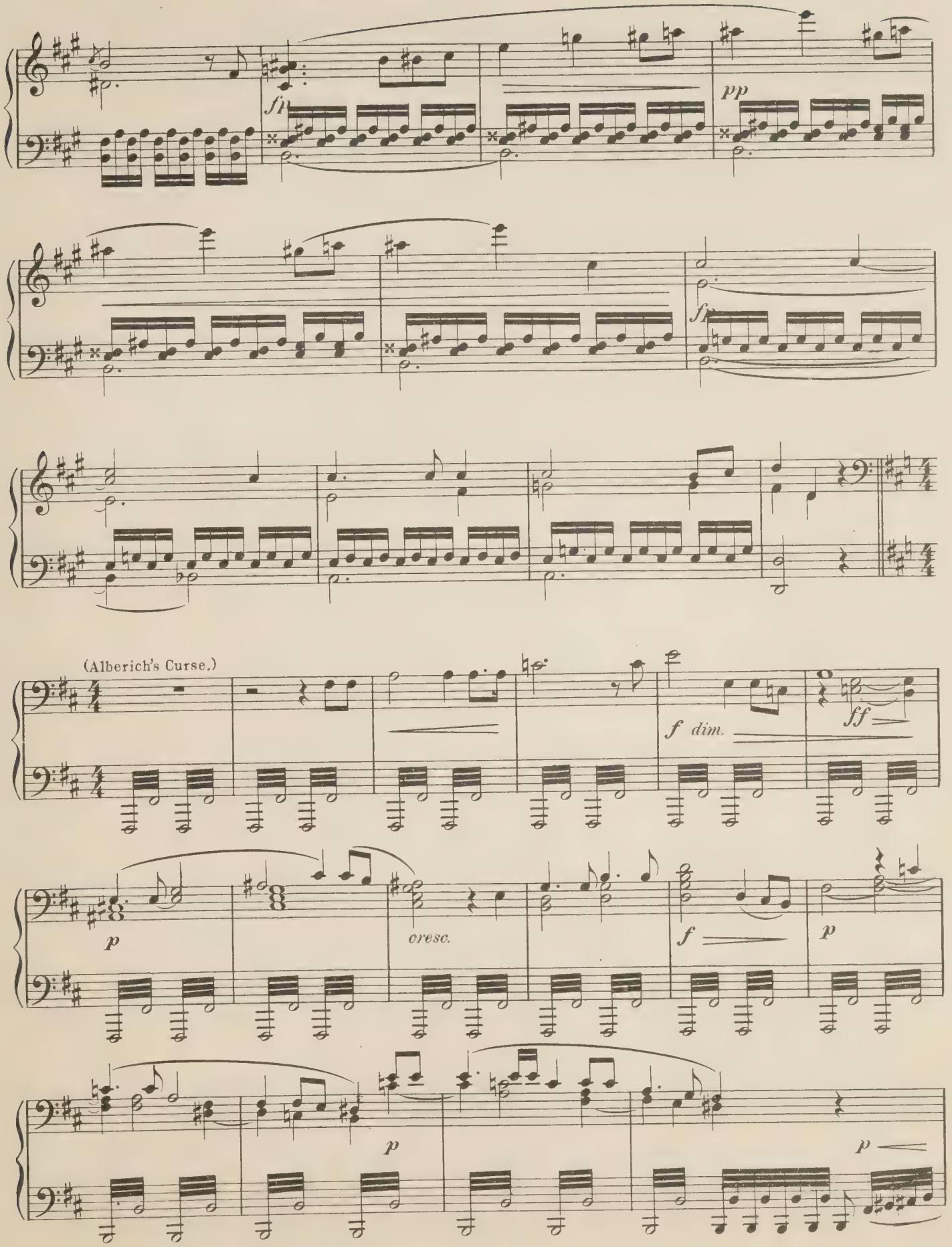

ff
ff
dim.

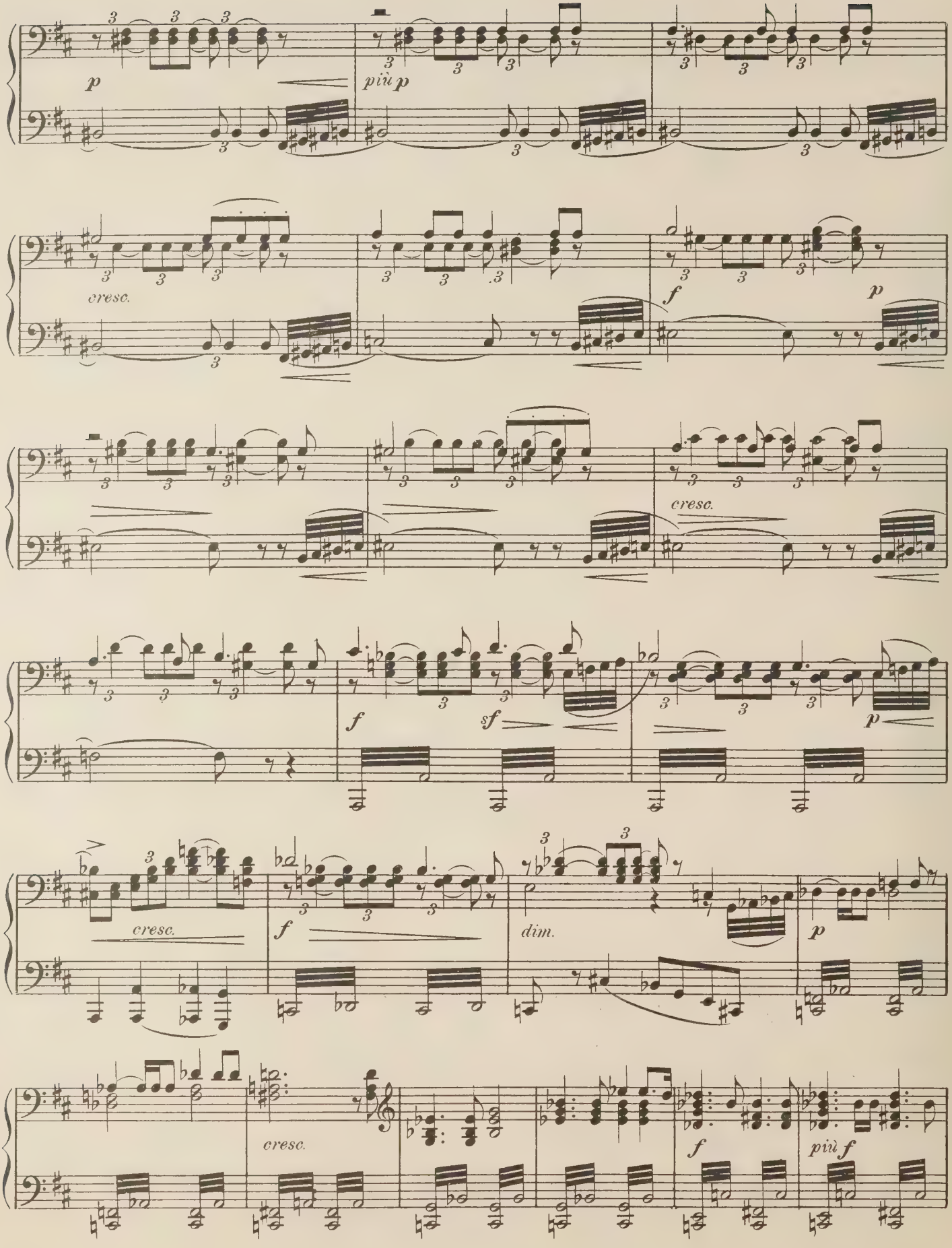

(Mimi's complaint.)
p
cresc.
p
cresc.
sf
p
p

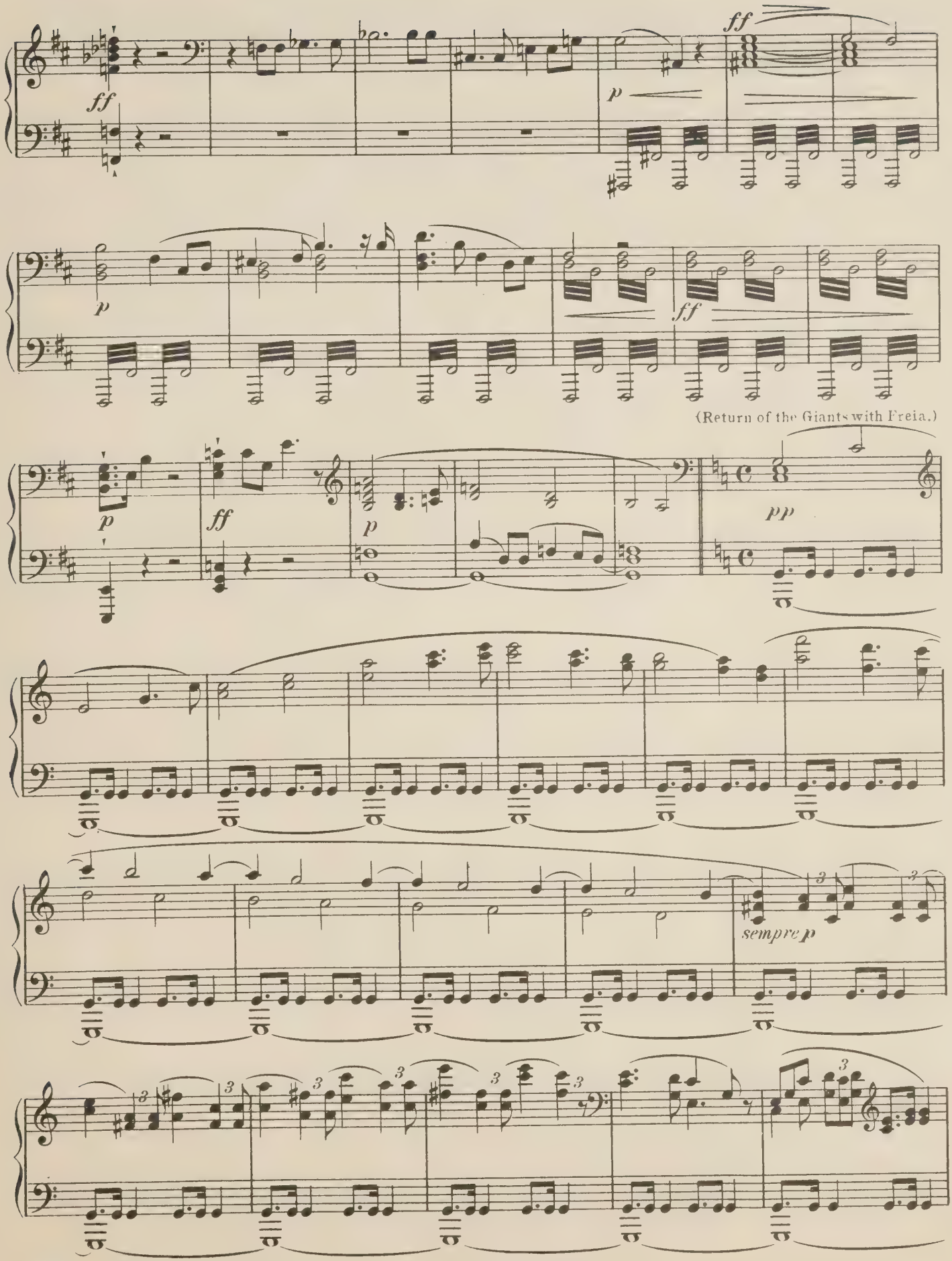

cresc.
f
p
ff
(Power hath puffed ye full of pride.)
Animato.
rit.
a tempo. p
fp non legato.
p
p
f
p
fp
p
p

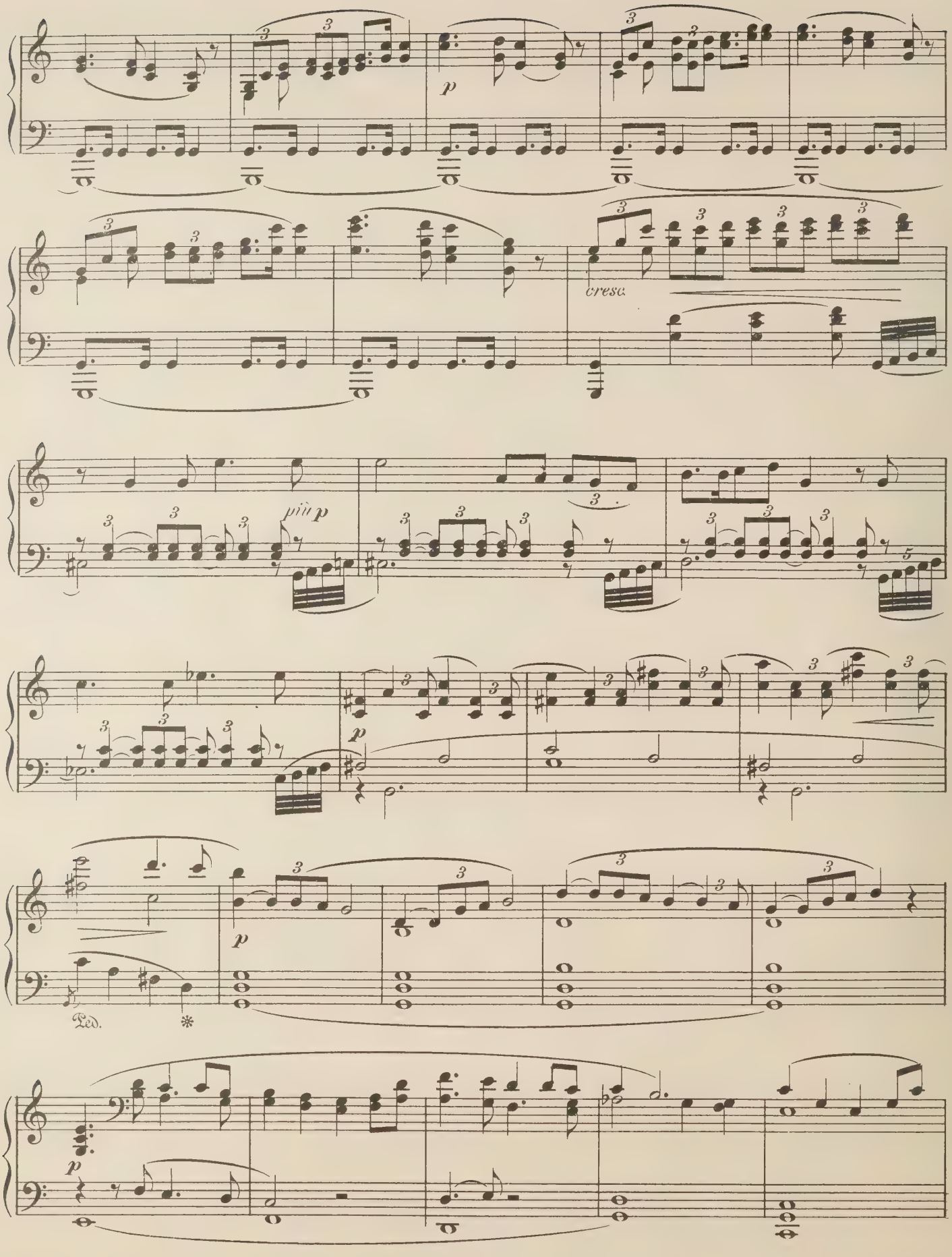

p
cresc.
f
p
f
p
f
p
p
p

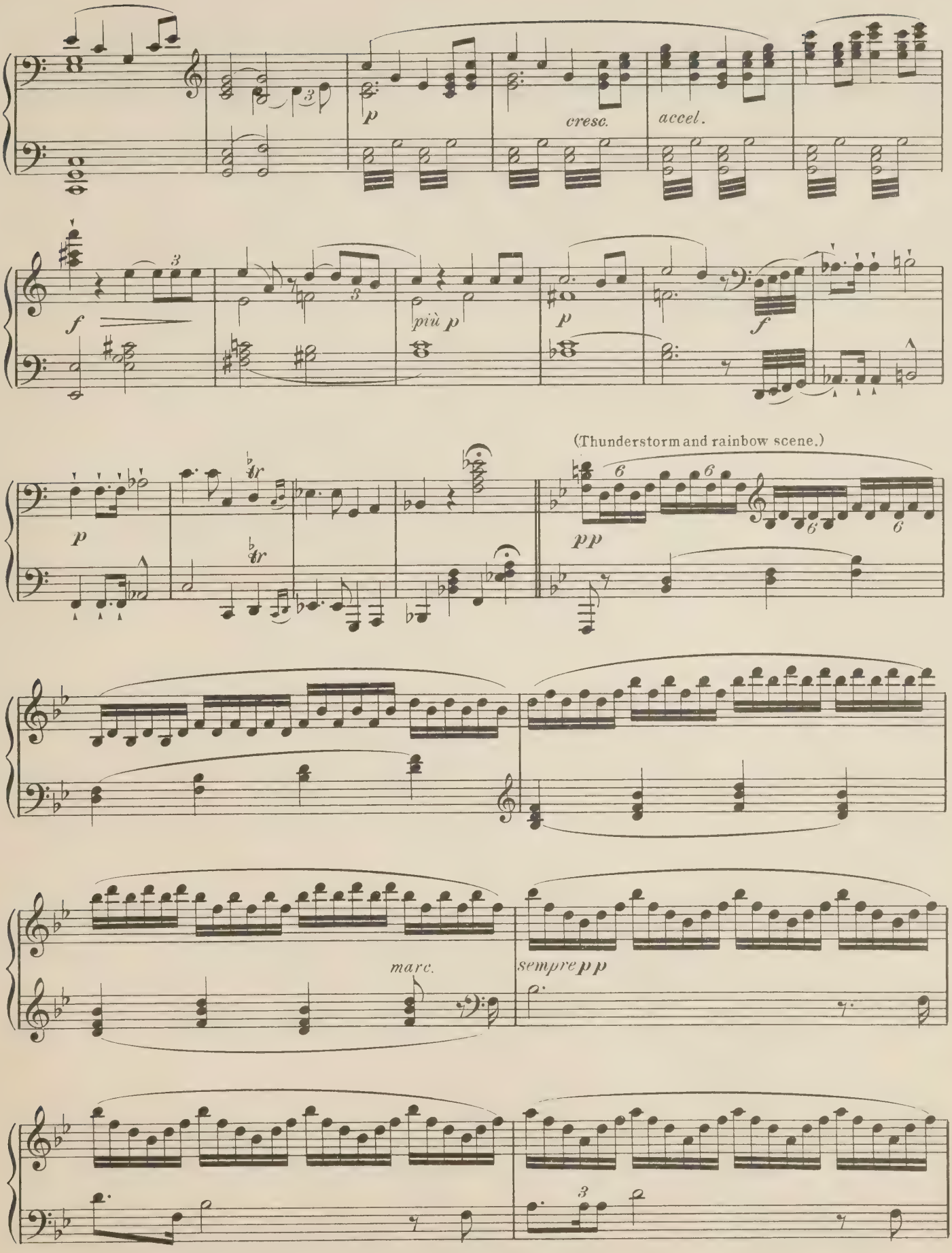

p
cresc.
f
p
cresc.
p
f
dim.
p
più p
pp

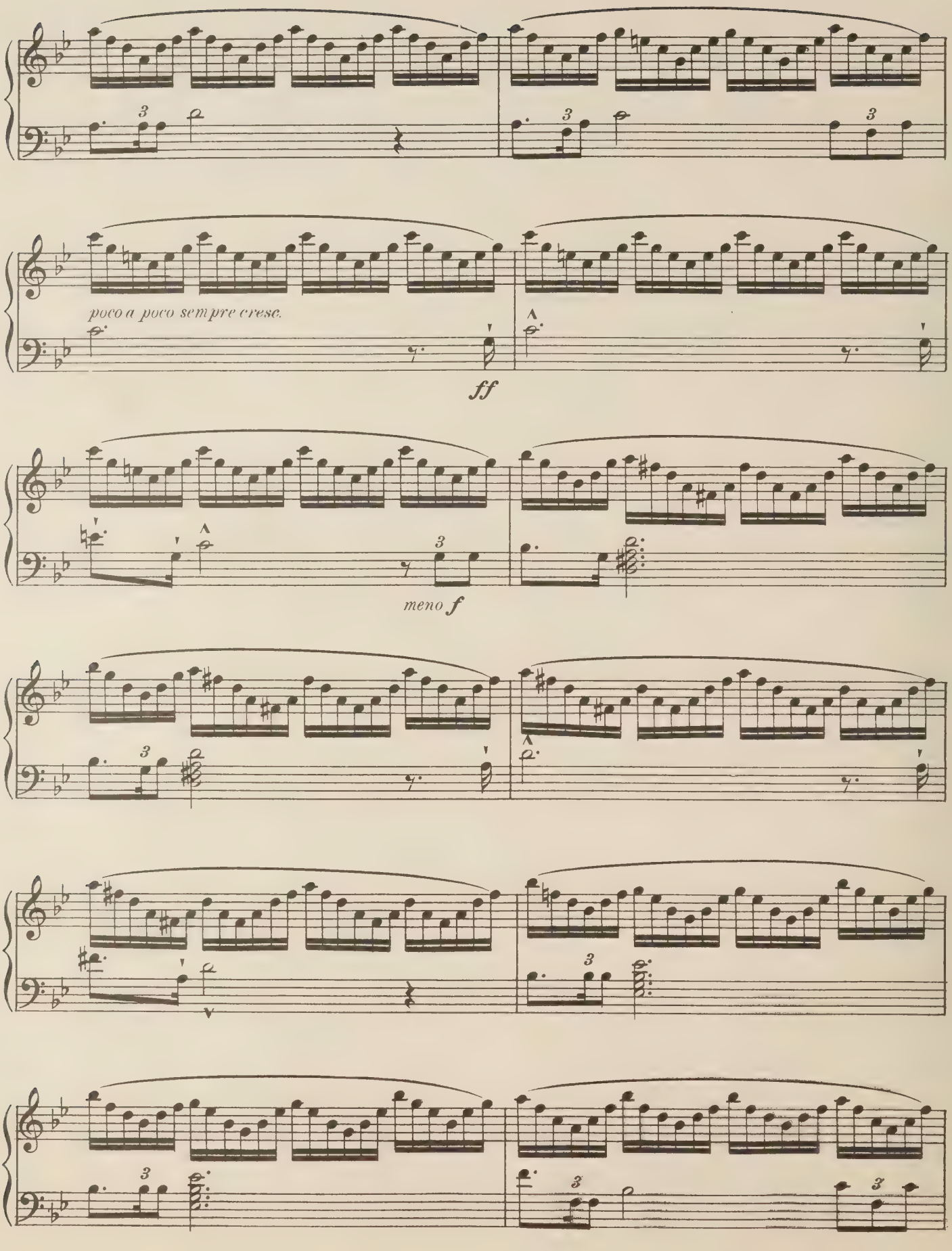

fp
pp
fp
(Alberich's Curse.)
f dim.
ff
p
cresc.
f
p
p
p

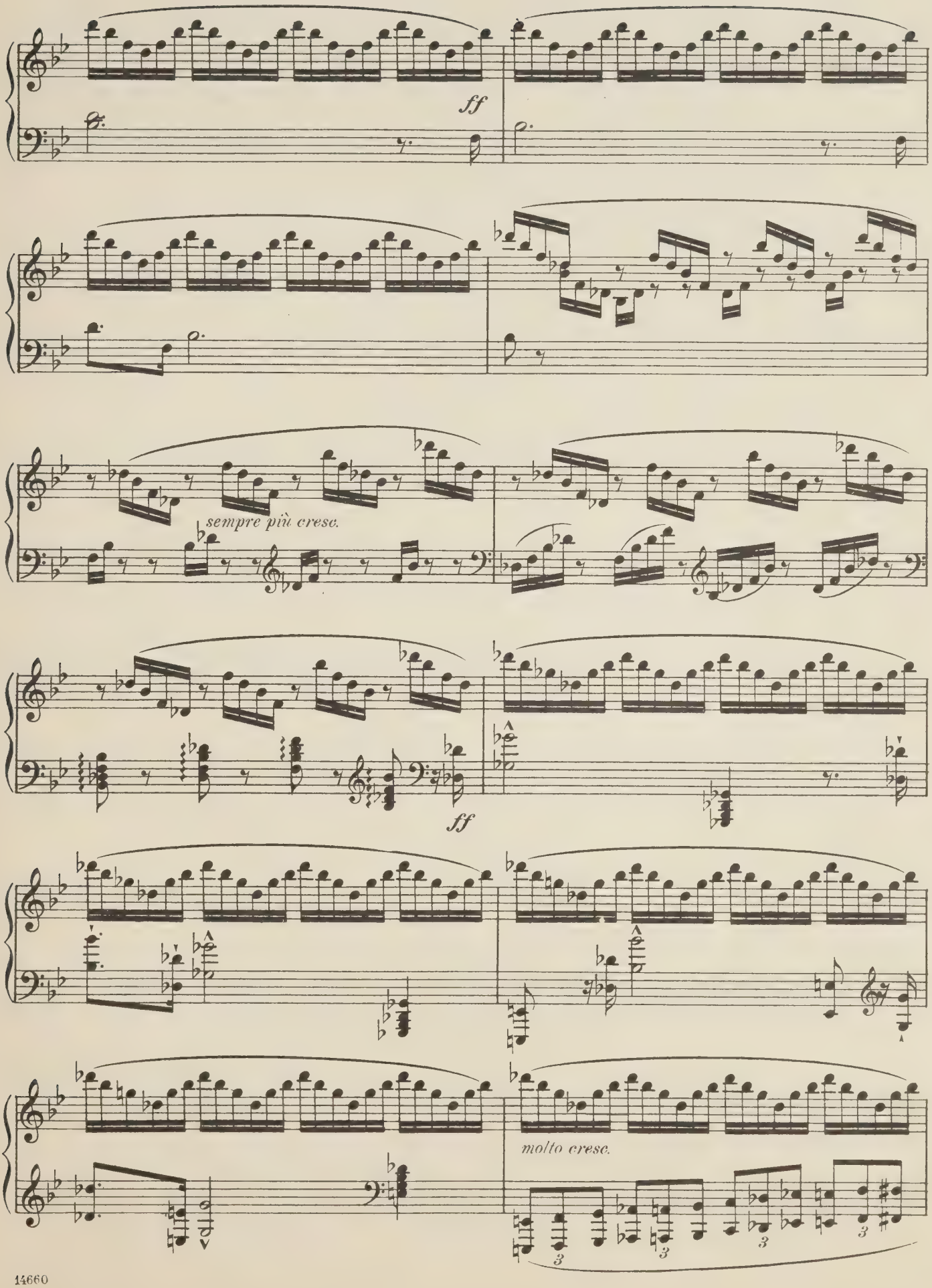

p
più p
cresc.
f
p
cresc.
f
sf
p
cresc.
f
dim.
p
cresc.
f
più f

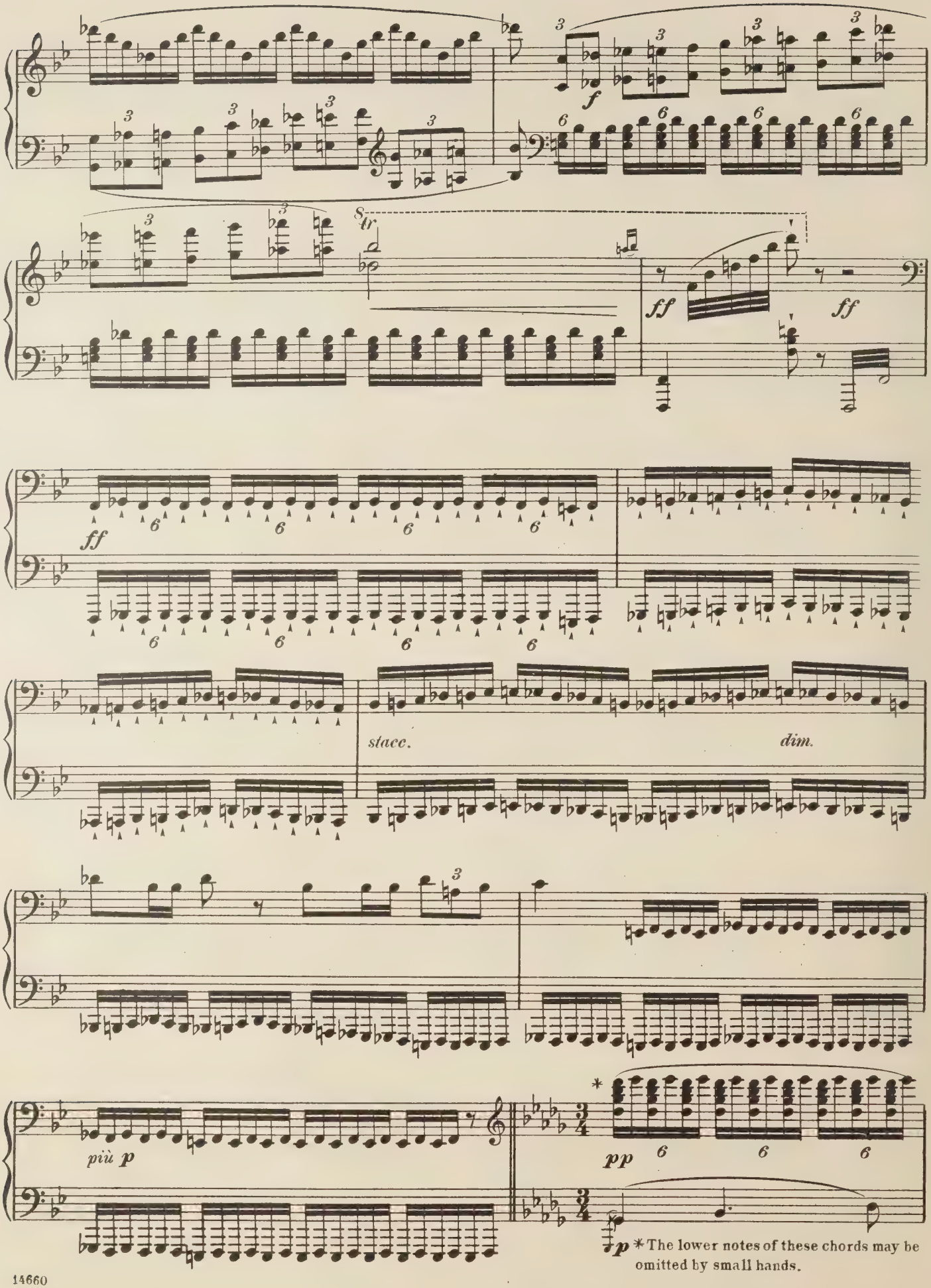

ff
ff
p
p
ff
(Return of the Giants with Freia.)
p
ff
p
pp
sempre p


p
cresc.
più p
p
p
Ped.
*
p

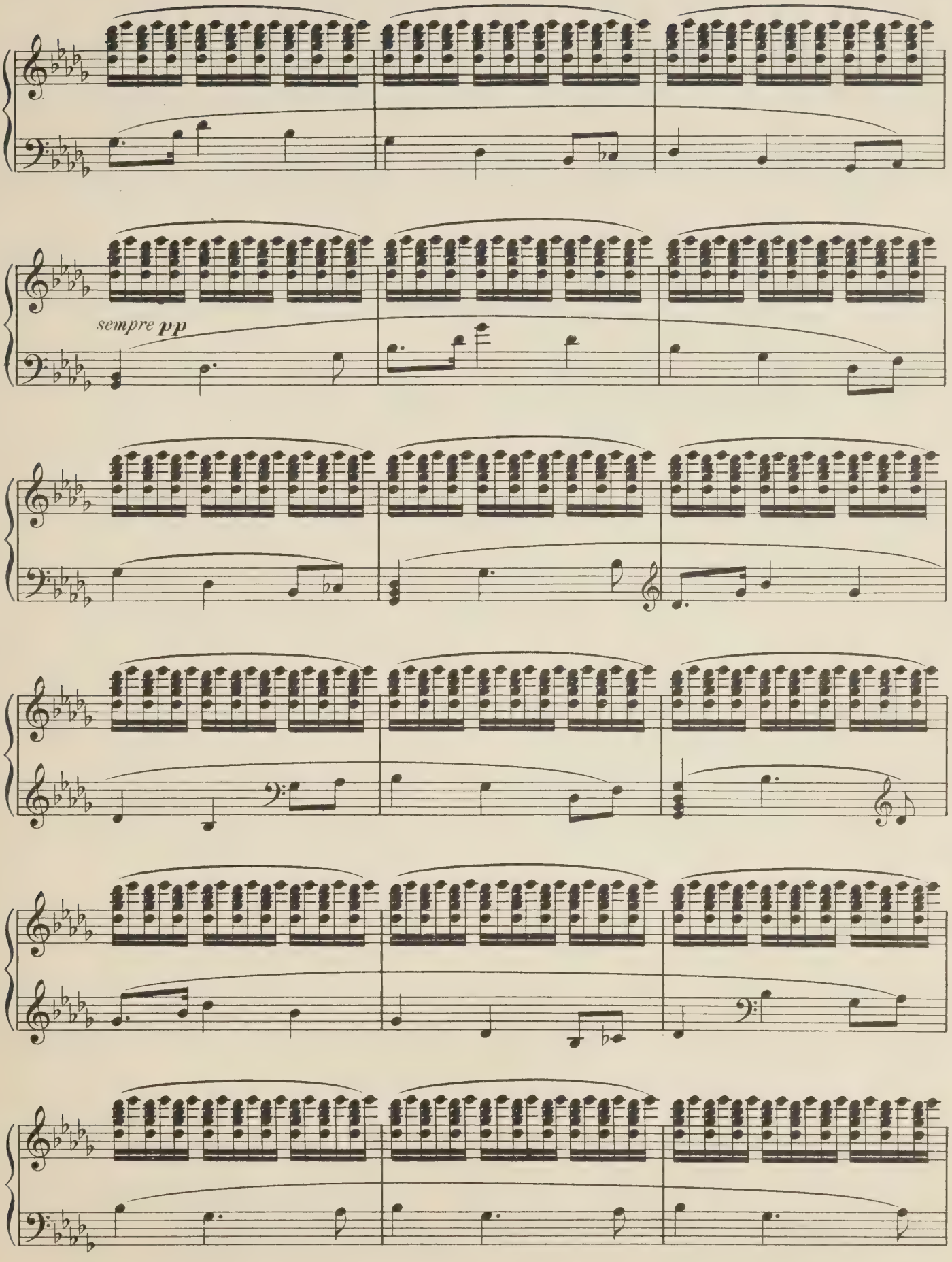

cresc.
accel.
più p
(Thunderstorm and rainbow scene.)
marc.
sempre pp

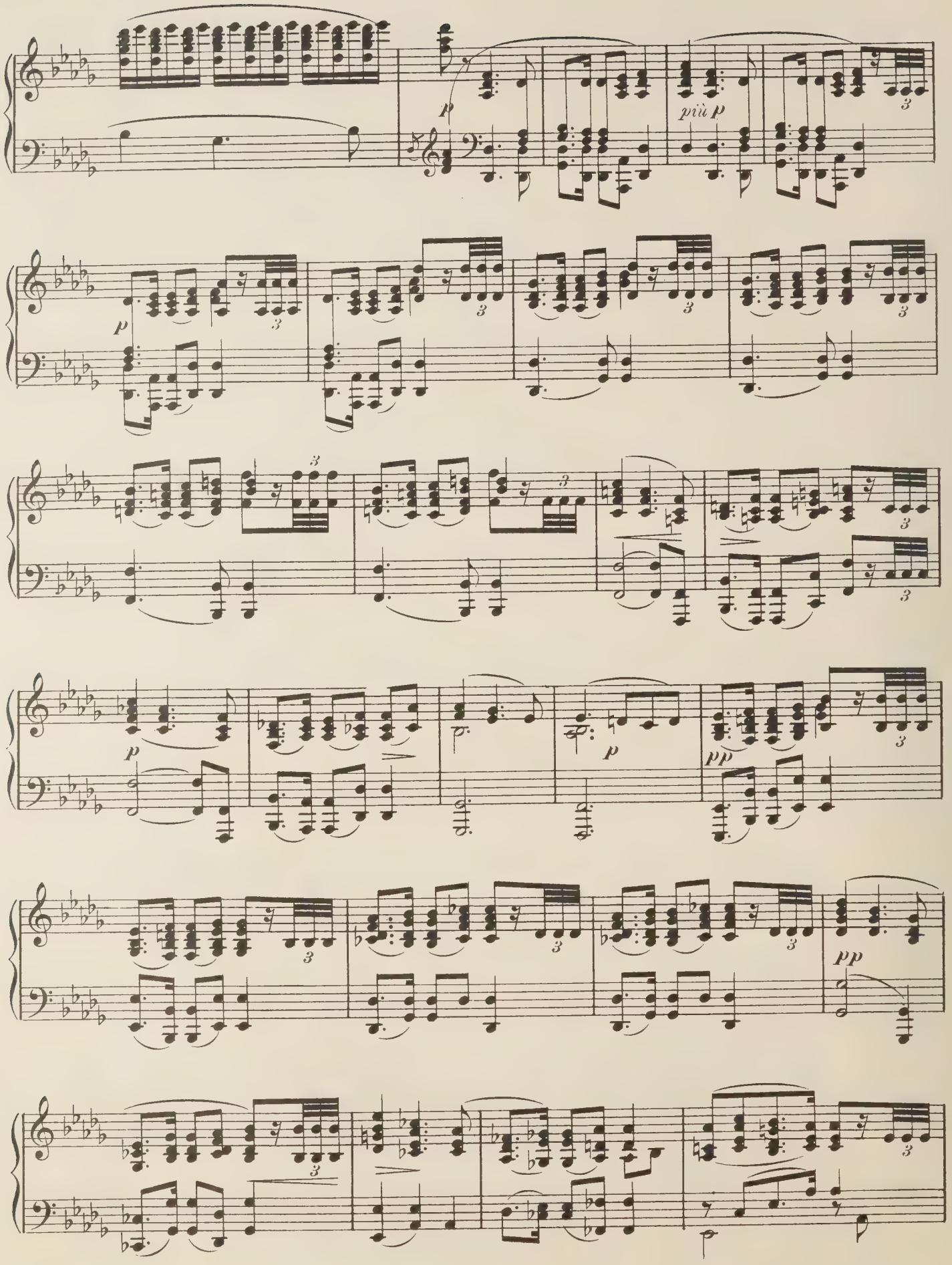

poco a poco sempre cresc.
ff
meno f

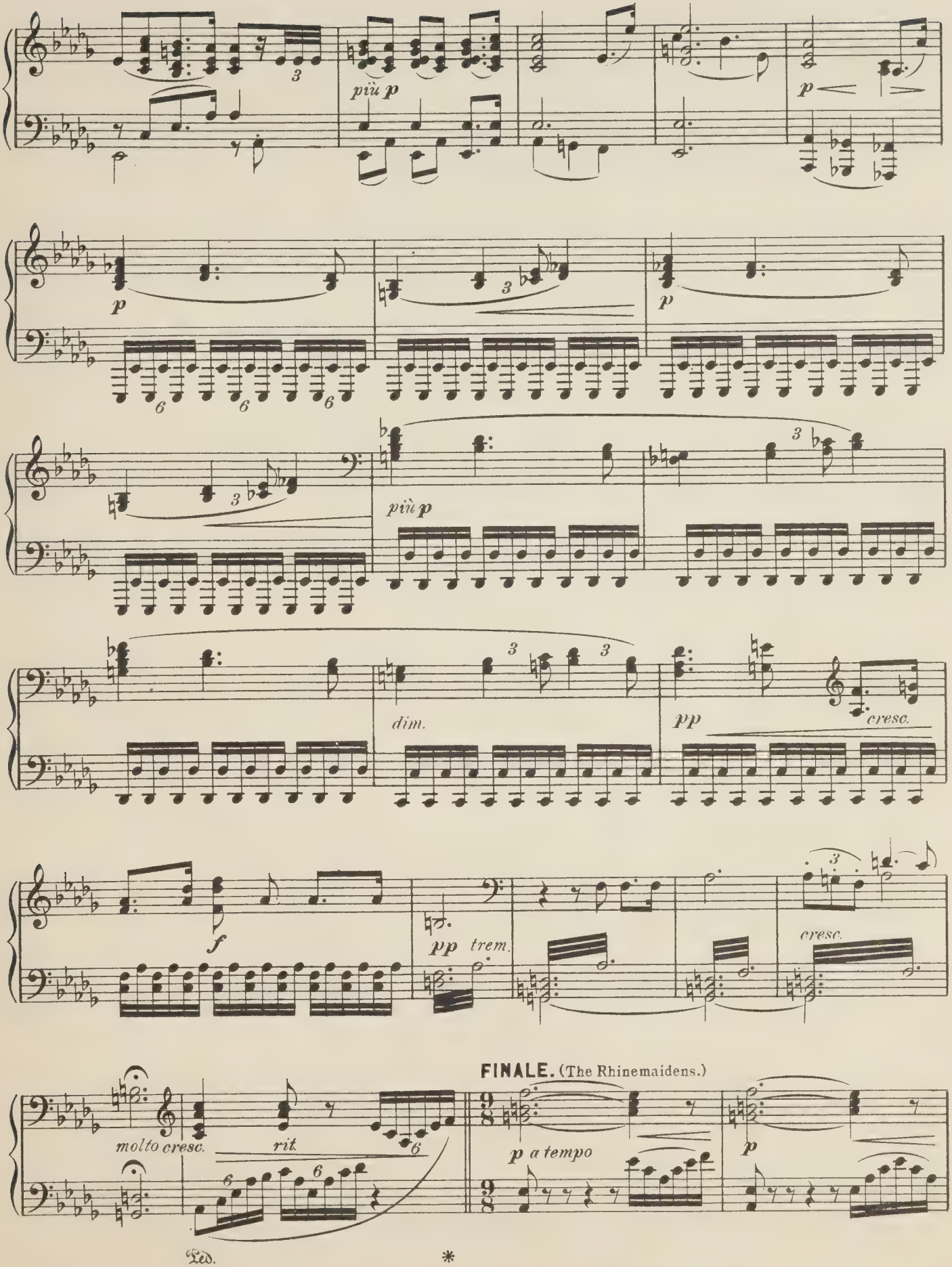

ff
sempre più cresc.
ff
molto cresc.

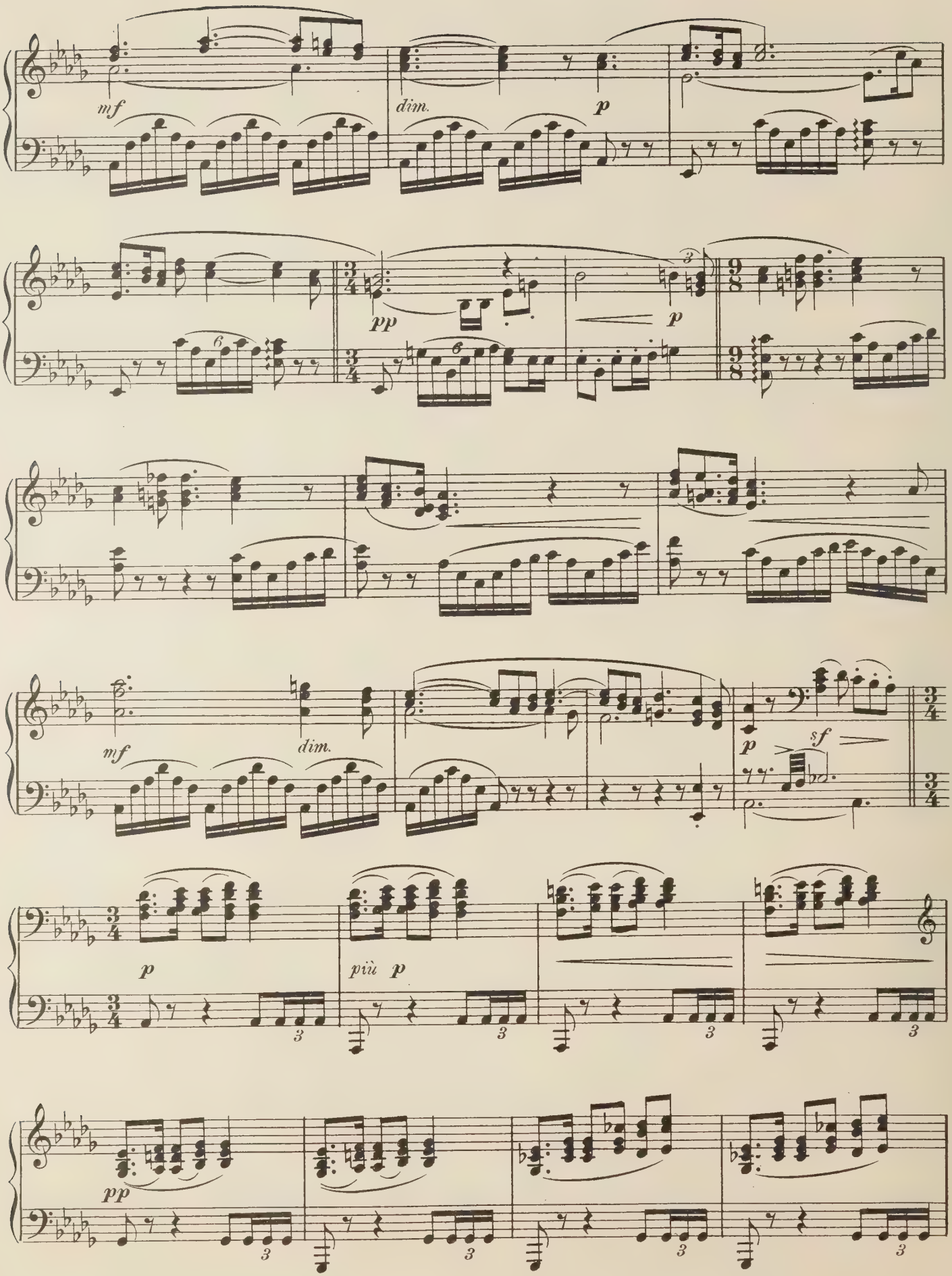


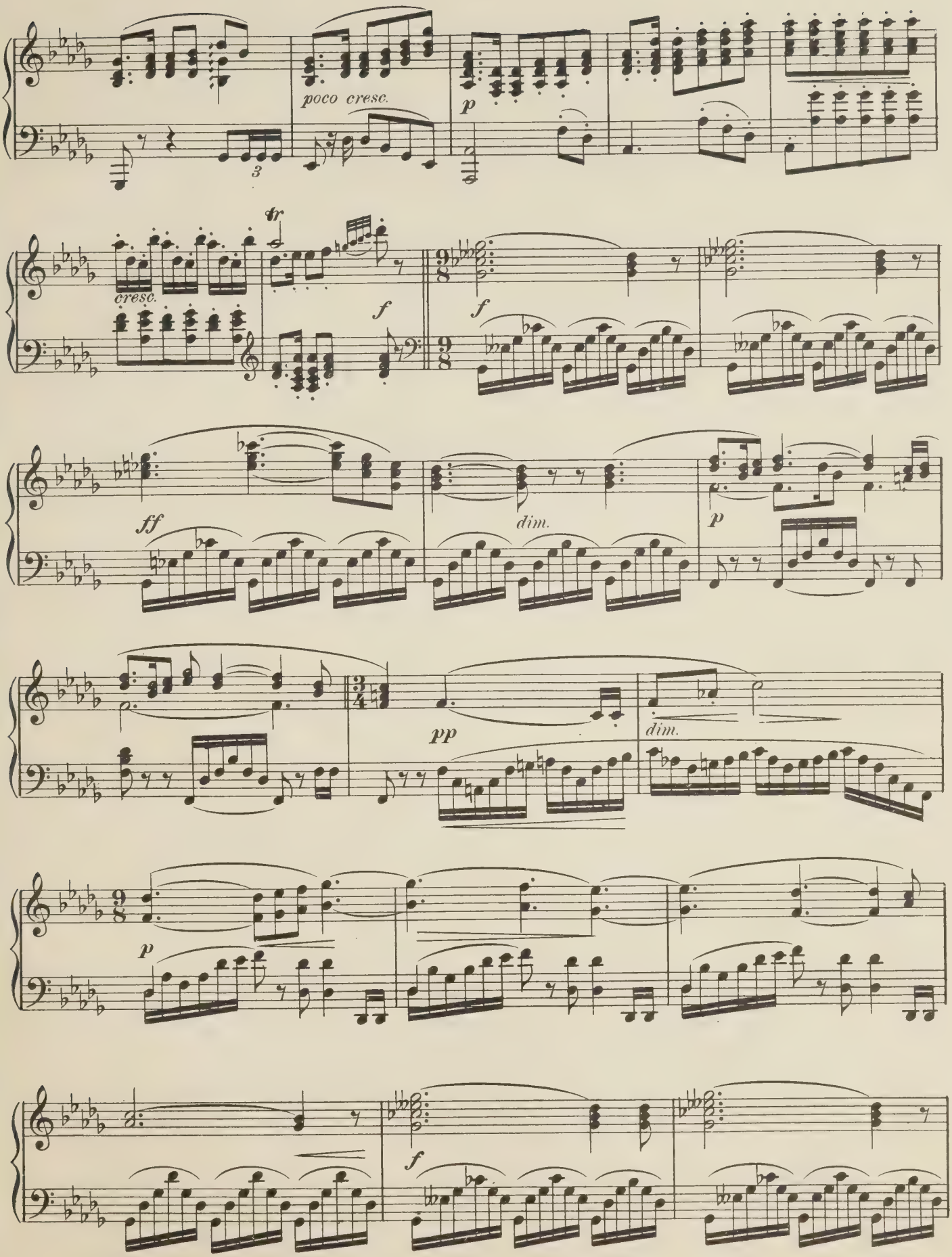
*The lower notes of these chords may be omitted by small hands.

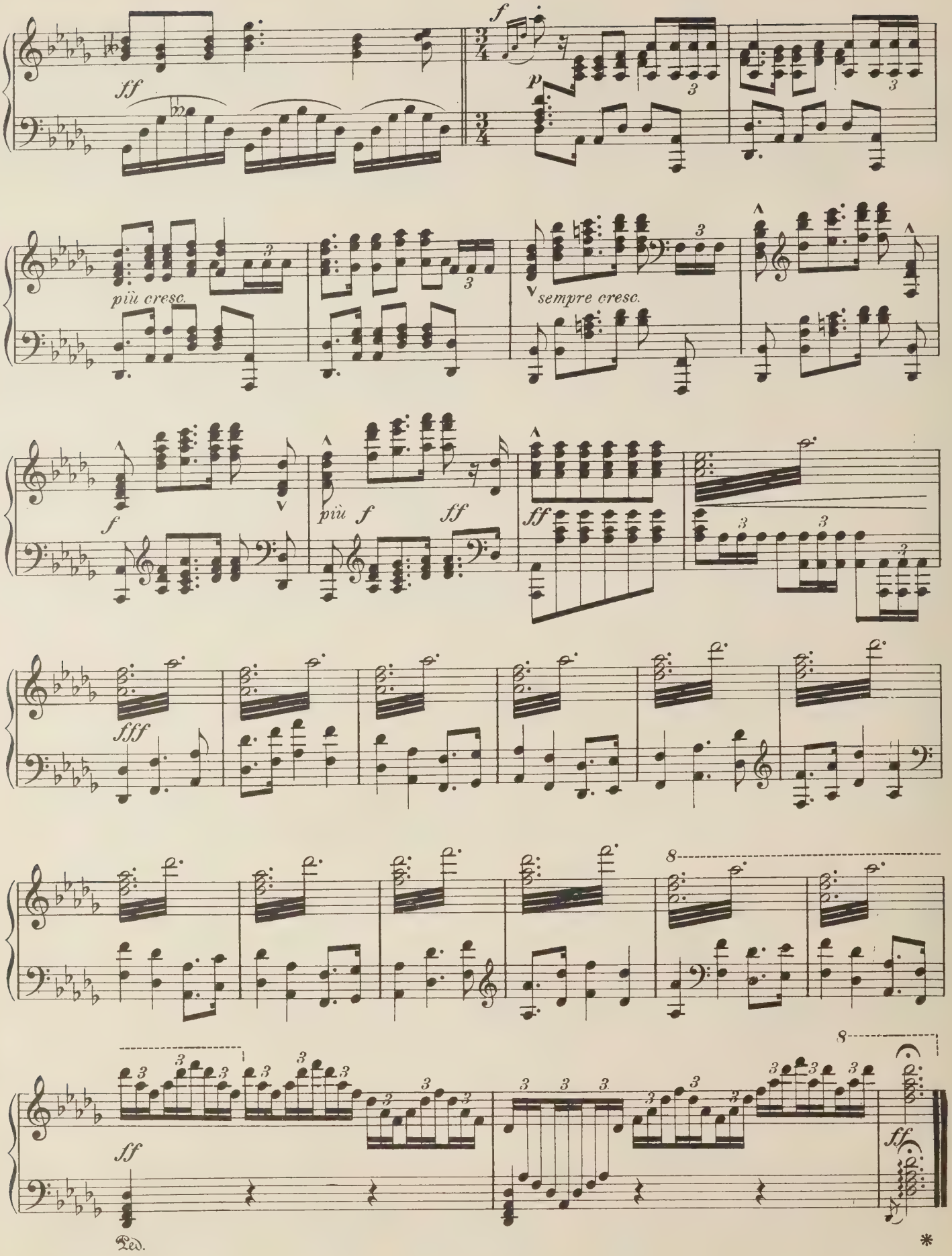

sempre pp


p
più p
p
p
p
pp
p
pp


più p
p
dim.
pp
cresc.
f
pp trem.
molto cresc.
rit.
FINALE. (The Rhinemaidens.)
p a tempo
Ped.
*


mf
dim.
p
pp
p
mf
dim.
p
sf
p
più p
pp


poco cresc.
p
3
cresc.
tr
f
f
ff
dim.
p
pp
dim.
p
f


ff
f
p
più cresc.
sempre cresc.
f
più f
ff
ff
fff
ff
8
8
ff
Ped.
*

M
33
.5
W24R5

Music

Wagner, Richard
[Der Ring des Nibelungen.
Das Rheingold. Selections;
arr.]
Selections for the
piano

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